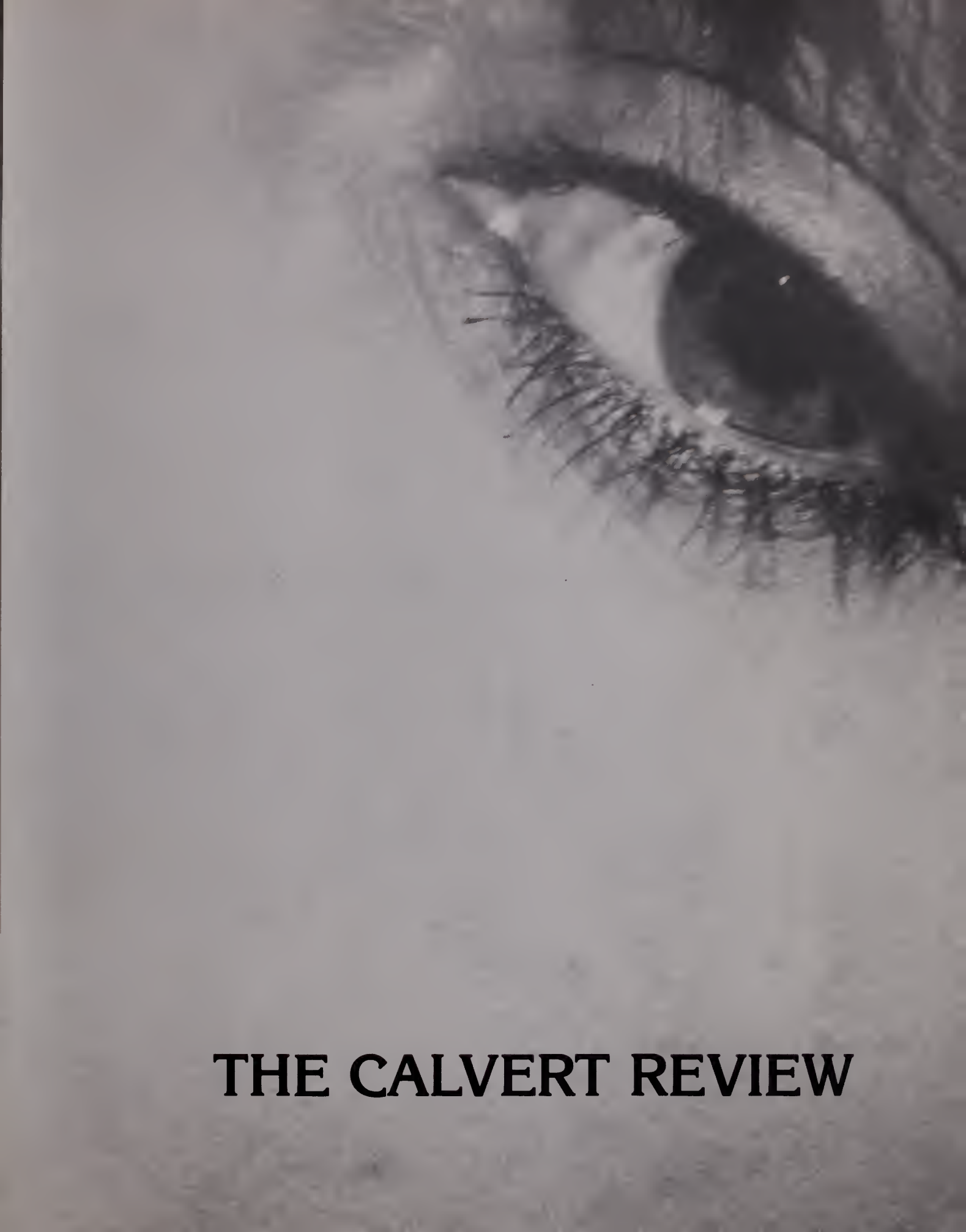

THE CALVERT REVIEW

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—Mike Garland

You do not need to leave your room.
Remain sitting at your table and listen.
Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not
even wait, be quite still and solitary. The
world will freely offer itself to you to be
unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in
ecstasy at your feet.

—Franz Kafka
The Great Wall of China
Reflections

MARKHAM IS MISSING

(an excerpt from the novel)

(Note to the Reader: Markham, wealthy and eclectic, has been missing for over a year and a half. Patton, his brother, a college professor on leave, searches for him. Patton has advertised for Markham in the classified section of the newspaper and has left a post office box number at which he can be reached.)

At the end of another week, counting he found it was his eighth, he made his usual by-now-beyond-routine check of the newspaper office. He spoke the number to the young female clerk as if an automaton, already turning away when she told him to wait and then came back with the small, white envelope.

For an instant, he stared at her without realization. She handed him the envelope, and he took it and thanked her and after she left him, he was left standing with no one to tell it to. All so commonplace and expected? Didn't people put ads in papers because they expected to receive answers? Now, the envelope in his hand, more than a redemption, seemed a mockery of his faith. Typical, Patton. Typical sell-out. Now aren't you sorry? Ashamed of yourself? It was just the right feeling. It freed his guilt and gave him in its place elation. He wanted to hug the insignificant marble columns one at a time.

Then he thought to examine the envelope more closely. Yes, there was Patton's correct box number typed over the newspaper's address. But there was no return address. Typical of Markham, trying to maintain his secrecy till the last.

Patton drove home with the unopened envelope sitting in front of him on the dash. It did not seem as hot. He turned on the radio and sang along, imagining what Markham had written inside. There would be of course his greeting, and then perhaps a half-hearted apology, Markham had not realized his extended vacation would so extremely affect Patton, and then an amusing anecdote or two, implying only vaguely what he had been doing and finally an address and a phone number. Markham would not say precisely why he had left his job so secretly and so abruptly . . . no, Markham would leave that out deliberately. He would wait for Patton to ask him.

The stolid, grim-lipped Ms. Suzinski seemed to be tearing out her already frazzled red roots and putting them back again when she met him in the entrance arcade, blocking the small path with her brick-like body.

"Good afternoon, Ms. Suzinski! How are you today?" Aware of his own good mood for the first time.

"Humphh . . . you didn't get any calls today . . . as usual."

"That's all right. I don't need any calls today, Ms. Suzinski! What do you think of that?"

He thought of showing her the letter, but then changed his mind.

"I think it's too hot to sit in that office all day long," she said.

"Don't tell me—"

"Yeah, don't tell me either. I tells them if they can't fix it and fix it right, they'd hear from their superiors."

He busied himself consoling the harrassed and harried apartment managerette; after all, it was the least he could do . . . considering. He tried to slip past her, but she didn't move.

"Er, what I want to talk to you about, Mr. Patton," a sly, furtive grin with a dirty twist of lips (he had explained about his name a hundred times), "something has come up."

He smiled benignly down from his exalted peak. The dear, dear child, she was so very earnest, it touched his heart. Just look at her. Eyes wide with worry, forehead furrowed like a series of slit trenches, impressive chest heaving with inner fury. He wanted to take her ugly red hand and pat it.

"If I can help in *any* way, Ms. Suzinski, all you have to do is ask."

A nasty pause while she looked down at his dusty shoes.

"It isn't so much you as me doing the asking I'm afraid."

"Oh?"

"It's a delicate thing, Mr. Patton. Maybe you better step into my office a moment."

Step into was about all one could do, certainly not move around very much. Dark clouds boiling up on the horizon, a line from some Conrad novel perhaps. This was another matter. He meant to be felicitous, even sympathetic, but things were getting out of hand. And then he remembered the envelope in his pocket. After all, what could it be but some harmless request that he turn down his television after ten o'clock or some such thing . . . .

"There's been some complaints."

"Naturally, if there's anything I can—"

She sagged down hard into her chair and blasted both fists against the glass desk-top.

"Damn it, sometimes I hate this job!"

He felt the tingle crawl into his armpits.

"No business of mine, I told them, but they insisted. They said I was the manager and it was my job to tell you." She paused. "Well, Mr. Patton, they been noticing certain things. About your . . . personal habits I guess you'd say."

He wrinkled the bridge of his nose, felt the sunburn.

"My personal habits?" shouting at her fallen chin and go-away eyes.

She nodded.

"Seems you're never home 'cept late at night. Never on weekends. They say they've tried to include you. Say you always beg off with some excuse."

"Just what are you taking me for, Ms. Suzinski?"

He would lift her desk and throw it through the window.

"Well, Mr. Patton, you got to understand things. People don't like to be snubbed. People don't like people to act like they're better, see what I say? You got to admit, part of getting along in this world . . . is mixing."

"Mixing?"

"Yeah, being more friendly-like, joining in, drinking it up, swimming a lot, using that barbecue some, you know what I mean, Mr. Patton, you're a grown up man, been around the world no doubt (he remarked that 'no doubt' and felt the urge to deny her implication). I mean, I've had to ask some folks to leave who just didn't fit in here."

"You mean because I don't take part in their swim parties and sex orgies and don't come home at five and burn burgers on their grill and swill down kegs of beer and tell dirty jokes . . . that's what they want me to do?"

"Guess that's about it, chief."

She was the only one at hand.

"And you back them up?"

"It's my job you know, keeping peace in the family. Don't want a lot of crummy letters going back to the folks in St. Louey. Mr. Patton, I've taken a liking to you. I told 'em you were only here a little while and you was looking for your long-lost brother and all and you had to work hard and everything else you said, but they—"

Then he realized what the letter actually meant to him. He had been so glad to receive it. He smiled again and shrugged.

"Never you mind, Ms. Suzinski. You were only doing your job, like you say. I don't blame you. In fact, I don't blame anyone. You know, they're probably right. I was so doggone wrapped up in finding Markham I forgot I was living with other people."

He bent and patted her on the back.

"Never you fret now, Ms. Suzinski. Hey, it's for my own good, isn't it?"

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continued from p. 5

She lifted her lioness head with an effort close to fatigue, her eyes wrapped in wreaths of puzzlement.

"Mr. Patton, I wouldn't do anything . . . I mean your behavior has been just fine as far as I'm concerned, it's just that . . . maybe a little swim here and there wouldn't hurt."

"No, no, come to think of it, they are entirely right. I intend to relax more. After all," grinning to imply his magnanimity, "I may not have another vacation for a long time."

He thanked her again and backed out of the office before she could reply, slipping down the cactus-belabored path to the stairway and the second level. As he opened his door, he noticed the heat pouring out and decided immediately that it might be a good time for a swim, noticing along with this thought that three young ladies had already gathered demurely by the water's edge and were testing the water with their tippy-toes. He hurried into his swim trunks, pleasuring in the newfound excitement. He resisted the urge to open the envelope that moment. No, it would be better to wait. He ambled casually down to the pool, smiling at the girl who was first to notice him, a beautiful red-head in a chartreuse string-bikini (Jenny was her name/he thought he remembered her). Her hair reached to the small of her shapely back, and she knew how to make it dance and shine in the sun. The other two girls noticed him and waved, smiling slightly.

"Hi, Mr. Patton. Beautiful day!"

He felt his nose crinkling again, only nodding grimly.

"We were wondering if the chlorine was too strong," the red-head shouted sweetly. He moved toward them.

"Would you like me to check the level?"

"Oh would you?" Jenny reacting for the three of them. The brunette was called Rosilyn, he thought. A bit too short and chunky but with big brown eyes that were fond of registering awe. The other was honey-blond, tall and full-breasted, but with a face marred by pox scars. He took up the cement disc and lifted the filter cage. With the test-tube dropper, he took a water sample and discovered that if anything the chlorine count was a bit low. They all seemed delighted at his news and wasted no more time before diving in.

"Don't stand there, Mr. Patton, join us," Jenny's delicate smile. "Or are you afraid of losing your tan too?"

He laughed and leaped in after them. At first they swam discreetly, making separate, short swims from edge to edge. They spent considerable time standing up and adjusting themselves, while he remained basically apart, making occasional wary glances. He felt himself winded by even this mild exercise. From somewhere appeared a big yellow ball and the women played a frolicsome game of catch, pretending to miss it and falling after it. Eventually the ball found itself at the deep end where he was resting by the diving board. He retrieved it and heaved it back. They giggled. When he saw it come at him a second time, he swam with it, pushing it along with his head. Then he swam under and leaped up, pushing it in the air with his head while barking like a seal. They laughed and clapped their hands with delight. He waded toward Jenny and handed her the ball.

"What do I get for my reward, a dead fish?"

"Oh, Mr. Patton, I had no idea," her smile fading.

They were joined by others. The rush-hour was on. Doors opening and closing, people shouting directions, dragging out small tables, chairs, pitchers of sangria, rubber mattresses, bottles of sun-tan lotion, and aluminum sheets. Much to his relief, everyone seemed to accept him without fanfare. He fitted-in to several casual conversations about traffic problems, the stock market's decline and the fate of the Suns basketball team. The women seemed friendly enough whenever he happened to glance their way. He was offered a glass and a deck chair and soon he was involved in a game of cards. Eventually everyone jumped into the pool and (strengthened by the sangria) waged a battle royal on rubber mattresses, wielding rubber-ring maces like the knights of old. Then a new game was called for and the women rushed to choose their "horse" to ride. It was all very hilarious and spectacular except that Jenny had chosen him, and he could not quite enjoy the feel of her long beautiful legs around his neck because of his wondering why. They managed to last until near the end before meeting their match and Jenny went plummeting head-first over his shoulders, taking him down because she did not relinquish her knee-lock on the neck and suddenly all was liquid and encompassing and slow-motion. In the intervening seconds she let go with her legs and coiled back, eyes-wide-open, grabbing at his waist with her hands and grinning teeth-clenched under-water fashion. She planted one tippy-toe between his legs and pushed off gently, leaving him behind. After that, he had to stay in the water before following the shouted directions of a college-boy type, Cliff-somebody, who took over the barbecue and was organizing the next stage in this planned retinue of pleasure. By this time, Patton had lost most of his inhibitions and felt an accepted member of the group. In fact, he was standing with his hand draped carelessly around Jenny's waist while he and a few other couples

continued on p. 7

WAITING

for my father

His thesis was crystals
compact enough to live
for weeks on sunlight.
He showed us constellations
while we slept on pillows
under meteor showers,
waiting for supernovas.
Or did headstands
on wet grass under the moon's
partial eclipse, pink craters
that ached to be beautiful.

Once in Virginia the sun
performed for him,
with shadow waves,
the threat of total blindness,
the diamond ring effect.
Always his telescope,
the extension of brown myopia,
was poised under the stars
he owned, the red and the blue,
the Horsehead Nebula,
the Seven Sisters.

We are still waiting
under starless nights for bright
and focused points of light,
with names like Ganymede, Io,
and Cassiopeia,
to count more moons,
to fall asleep under the influence
of a different gravity.

—Judith Skillman

continued from p. 6
watched the juicy red meat broil itself into small balls of black. A beer in his other hand, he grinned often enough and laughed discreetly enough while the quips, jokes, slurs and innuendos flew like feathers in a pillow fight . . . it was keep it light and keep it fast, can you top this one, here's another coming your way, oh-ho you dog, still waters run deep, funny is as funny does, hy-oh-silver away, hey we're all friends here, who stole my swim fins . . . he didn't stop to undermine his mood with questions. He was having fun. He'd been working hard without any results. What the hell. Maybe he had been straight too long. And of course, always, resting firmly and finally in the back of his mind was the contemplation of the letter. It was still in his room waiting for him. What did he have to lose?

After hamburgers and beer (the sangria had gone down with the sun), the dropping temperatures moved people to put on shirts and sweaters. Patton noticed that most of the other men wore special matching shirts and that two of the women had terry-cloth tops like his. But after all, it didn't seem to matter what anyone was wearing. They were all friends, weren't they? He felt the glow overcome him. A feeling of great goodwill toward these neighbors of his. What a fool he had been to think them shallow and immoral. They could converse on serious subjects as well as play, and so someone kept handing him a cold beer and laughing at his quips and asking him sincere questions until he eventually noticed that people were disappearing, fading away into silently closing doors. He felt deserted by the easy, relaxed feeling that had been dominating him. Jenny, who had been to the little girl's room as she called it, suggested calmly that she was cold and would like to watch TV and did he Patton have one? He managed to say yes and then followed her to his small, studio apartment. She entered first, not waiting for him to close the door before she was at the refrigerator and examining its contents.

"Gee whiz, Pat-honey, it's empty!"

He laughed at her school-girlishness.

"Look in the freezer," he suggested.

"Honestly, sweets, how can you live on TV dinners?"

"I eat out a lot."

"Can I fix you something really scrumptious sometime? I'm a good cook you know, besides . . . " fading her voice into a demure, eye-lash tribute to her own attributes.

He swallowed hard and accepted her invitation.

"When?" she asked suddenly. "How 'bout tomorrow morning? I'm best at breakfast time," then giggling. "I mean, I do breakfast thing-a-majigs best."

"I'll leave it up to you."

She closed the door and turned toward him. She was wearing a green, pull-over sweater that draped magnificently and seemed even taller indoors, next to his short, humming refrigerator which had practically nothing in it. Was he more vulnerable because she knew the emptiness of his freezer compartment? He kept studying the top of the TV where he had placed the still-unopened letter. She saw him looking there and yet did not move to turn it on.

"Wonder what's on?" he asked fitfully.

She picked up the TV Guide he put there religiously each week and never read, and paged it listlessly, not really reading it he supposed. He also supposed it was up to him now. He would have to make the first move. After all, they each had their prides at stake. He swallowed again and got up stiffly, standing awkwardly at her side as they both pretended to read the small magazine. His hands were within centimeters of touching her. She smelled of chlorine and sun-tan lotion and something else, not so much a smell as a palpable thing, like an aura, a haze of personality with enough substance to both attract and repel him. She was both a completely vulnerable thing and an impenetrable fortress. He felt a swoon of fear grip at him and then fade, while he fisted his hands and bit his teeth so as not to fall. She was paging more relentlessly now, carelessly, faster and faster and faster

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CALLING COLLECT

(for *Operaesje Fers, Fryslân*)

This does not want to be a recording.
It has come over consonants
from a distant mouth
just to step aside for 60 seconds
as a place where we can meet.

You dialed a poem and got
the air on your cheek that woke you once
or this stranger
coming now up your street
to that barking of dogs —

you got an old tin cup
that begs for Frisian words
because the black wind and the water
have failed to teach me how you talk.

I have to hear you
the deepest thing you almost said today
is needed like your breathing
that I can hear on the line

stay on the line this is not
technology not just a recording believe
me believe me believe me bel-

—Roderick Jellema

continued from p. 7

. . . soon she would be at the end of the magazine and it would be too late! He reached out for her hand, but by unhappy accident she took precisely that moment to jerk her arm just enough to move his target out of the line of attack and like a dumb, relentless torpedo his hand continued on oblivious of its escaped victim, landing by pure luck of direction on the top of the TV exactly where his letter sat.

So he picked it up.

She put down the TV Guide carelessly so that it fell onto the floor.

"Gee, you got a nice place here," she said, in a flat, tired voice.

He flared inside. He could not endure another feeling of aftermath, another recriminating might-have-been. Fail he might, but try he would!

So he laughed, a loud boisterous laugh. It was sometimes a start, at least something to fill the vacuum of his hesitancy, his sense of incapacity. She relaxed somewhat and smiled.

"You're a funny guy, Pat."

She wound a finger through her hair and swung her hips around him, undulating toward the couch (his bed) and flopped down, putting her incredibly long legs up and across the brown, formica coffee-table. She seemed more unapproachable that way, but he would find a way, must find a way.

He lifted the letter as if it were a surrender flag, waved it at her.

She grinned crazily and nodded.

"You got something good, huh? What is it, Pat-honey, your draft notice?"

He stood, as if forgetting the simple faculty of sitting down. She ran her hands under her sweater and onto her breasts. Then she shivered dramatically.

"Cold in here," she said sweetly.

He threw the letter down on the table, right next to the unending length of her leg, and pointed to it.

"You may not believe me, Jenny, but that's the most important letter I've ever received."

She looked suspicious. It was a blot on an otherwise blank slate.

"How can you tell? You haven't opened it."

"But I know who it's from."

"But there's no return address."

In his annoyance he didn't answer her.

"Anyways," she said, "what's the big deal about some crummy old letter? People get letters all the time. Even I get letters . . . marked occupant," giggling exaggeratedly, "Say I'm really thirst. You don't happen to have any booze hidden some place, do you?" More outrageous giggling.

"Look, I'm perfectly serious! That's why I came here. That's why I'm working at a job . . . well let's just say I've had to put up with a lot. And it's all right here," picking up the letter and pointing it at her, "*This* is what I've been waiting for."

"You know something, Pat. What do I see in you?"

He jerked upright. He'd been standing there talking when he should have been . . . but he didn't have any booze, or a record player or even anything to eat. All he had was ice, lots and lots of ice. He didn't in fact have any reason to know her (or want her) except one and he couldn't start out with that.

She watched him closely. Finally she took his hand and made him sit beside her.

"Come on, Pat-honey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything. It's just . . . before you were such a mean awful fella, never saying hi to me or anything and always skulking around so you didn't have to see me, and then today in the pool, you were fun, really fun. You know what. I bet there's a lot more to you Pat-honey than meets the eye."

He blushed, but was happy to be back in her good graces, even if it were a bit demeaning.

He took his hand away from hers and grabbed the letter.

"I want you to do me a favor and read this for me, aloud."

She watched him to see if he would explode.

He set his chin and put a gleam in his eye. He always felt a similar feeling when people pushed him too far. A surging, pulsating, blasting push of blind-fury nothingness with which to blot out all the fear, all the hate, all the guilt. So that he could be free at last (even if only for a moment) from all the thousand-fold burdens of emotion that he took with him everywhere. He supposed it was a kind of patented dementia which he fashioned, produced and marketed when circumstances warranted it.

"Please, as a special favor to me. I'll explain later. You'll see. You'll thank me. *Jenny*," hazarding her name once again, pausing for effect, "guess you can tell I'm the shy type. To be quite frank, you overwhelm me. I've known very few women in my life and you're by far the prettiest and sexiest, yes by far." He gulped boyishly. "Anyway, I want you to know it's me. Not you."

He didn't dare look at her. He felt that he had both ruined his chances forever and won her over completely. He was merely waiting to see which of these interpretations was correct. Yes, he could explain it — the come down. The slide down the steep spending-spent passion of his floating feathery aloofness. Then a cool wash across his brain and the feeling of being frozen, inside-out.

She took his hand and moved it up and across her stomach and under the soft green sweater. Her skin was cool. To the still damp bikini and under its tiny cup and onto her hardening, enlarging nipple. It was the breast closest to her heart, and he felt it beating there under her soft flesh, beating fast terribly fast, as if it were beating faster and faster for his sake, and he wanted to slow it down but he couldn't reach through the mound of breast under his fingers to touch it, to still its furious and frightening pace. Her neck and then her cheek and then her lips moved against him in each of his own respective areas and her breath came in a rush into his breath and merged into a stilled breath and then a mutually gasping release and an incumbent and proportionate rush of hands, hands inside of bikini pants and hands inside of swim trunks and hands pulling off bikini pants and hands pulling down swim trunks and hands rubbing and hands caressing and hands shaping and hands probing and then bodies tumbling away from the hands until there were no more hands and only bodies and extensions and indentations of bodies and there were no more bodies but only one awkwardly unmovable cumbersome body that had to roll to get anywhere and grunt and scream with the effort to stop itself until at last its motions met with itself and moved and changed and found itself and resumed itself in a slowly ever-increasing melding of rhythmic pulses . . . rising to a crescendo of stopping . . . and then planing out. To be immediately circumvented by an easy sailing into quietness and calm. To be slowly and painfully revealing of self, of reality, of flesh and blood and hair and rug and light and dark and table and wall and room and . . . Jenny human-being-person-woman and he Patton human-being-person-man with all their previous implementia of life exactly where they had laid it down moments before, precisely where they had left it centuries ago. It was both a rude, ugly insult and a blatant, absurd relief that he must make his return down the slippery path of who am I and why am I doing this and is it all right and what does she feel and what are we going to do and say now and after that what? Oh endless, yes! Ever so ungloriously endless! But one can't lie on a furry rug forever without one's clothes and without one's words, so it became then only a matter of who would first break the charmed circle and he supposed he knew who that would be even before he knew it.

"Now, will you read the letter to me?"

Well, Patton said to himself, it wasn't

like you might think. It's different now. It's all right now. It's not necessary now.

And she saw him grinning and then she was grinning and taking the letter and opening it and reading it aloud:

Dear 4763211. I'm sorry I don't know your name. You sound like a very very nice person to me. My name is Roger. I won't tell you my last name until you know me because it's a funny name and I'm afraid you'll laugh. Anyway it doesn't matter because I know we're going to be friends. I know this because of the way you wrote to me. I read your words and it was spooky. You see into the midst of my soul. I am waiting here, yearning for you to come. Oh my god, how happy I was the first day I read your words to me in the newspaper. How wonderful you must be. I wish I knew your name. But don't worry. I understand why you can't put your name in there. So I will use the telephone number you gave me, and we can arrange—

He leaped to his feet, searching everywhere for his swim trunks and not finding them and swearing god-damn-it-son-of-a-bitch where until Jenny stopped her hysterical laughing long enough to point and then use the same hand to rub away the tears which ran down her face and he was into his trunks and out the door without closing it while still hearing her laughter as he bolted down the cold cement balcony-overhang and leaped down the steps four-at-a-time and twisted right and then left through the concrete-block corridor and burst into and onto and over the poor, frightened Ms. Suzinski who looked up at him as if he were the monster-robber-rapist-jack the ripper of her worst nightmares and half-grabbed for a desk drawer where perhaps lay a gun and with the other hand her short red hair which she pulled too hard and jerked clear of her head and so had to sit there wild-eyed and bald while managing only a long series of ever-lessening "what's" until he had reached the final tightening-end of the fifty foot (so it could reach poolside of course) coil of phone cord and with one mighty pull, yank it unceremoniously from the wall . . . and only then to sigh and sit down backwards onto whatever might be there beneath him to greet and console his perspiring and retiring id. He took the now dead black snake and heaved it in all good riddance at his own bare feet and looked up into the blood-streaked eyes of his balding friend and pursed his lips and shook his head and finally managed a blurted, disheartening apology. Ms. Suzinski took out a pencil and a pad of paper from the open drawer, wrote something down, returned the pencil and pad to the drawer and then closed it. She put her hands over her eyes and sighed.

"Mr. Patton, I'm afraid I must tell you. I don't agree with the concensus of opinion. It seems I liked you better the old way."

—P.H. Porosky

Portugese Woman

—Mike Garland

Gini and Yanni —Anne Rogers

PORTRAIT OF MOTHER

Her hand drifts
erratically
over the ashtray,
tapping Morse code
poke poke pokepokepoke.

  Hunched
in a white wood
chair,
bony chin
fixed
on bony wrist,
her tongue flicks
at a remaining trace of orange.

(In another country,
other voices
tell her I'm not
her daughter).

eyes wide blue
like stars, wandering
through air patches,
descending as a raven's claws
on the cold black stove,
the blind slapping the sill,
her own yellowed
fingers.

I hold a cracked photo:
a woman in a Bergdorf shift
folds white gloved hands
over the railing
as she sets off on a Bermuda cruise.

—Betty Bernard

BECAUSE MY DAUGHTER IS LAUGHING ON THE PHONE

The girls crowd the corner,
a young forest of legs
and shiny hair.
They gossip.
They giggle.
Their pockets rounding.

All in all they resemble grasses
askew with summer.

They will be here this August
and next
and the next
watching their nipples.

Then the world will rain
down on them;
they will spread out for shelter
and find there is none.

—Sibbie O'Sullivan

ROSES

Roses leer when they lean
like adults over me. I tell you
there is not a crooked tooth
or petal out of place among the lot
of them. I have gone mad
beneath the eye of a rose,
torn them bud by bud
from their brittle stems.
Leveled all, a whole damn garden
of roses, I have buried like hatchets
between us and still,
a sudden strain
their music would startle me
with shadows; their bloodless
fragrance. It remains
poised in the mind
like a thorn.

—Cynthia Matsakis-Anderson

Father: October 29, 1929

—Steve Hammerman

OLD MEN

Old kneeless men
in funny broke-brimmed hats,
the crisp hair creeps
up the valleys of their napes
like sharp frost
on early spring earth.
Some have heads smooth and
fragile as eggshells.
Old men wearing
strange pairs of colors:
teal and tobacco,
dustbrown and dustgrey.
They smell of smoke and wine and iron.
We meet in the winter street
and breathing one another's air,
we comment on the condition
of the sky and exchange smiles:
my fat, wide childeyed smile
hangs like a ripe grape
in the shallow December air
for their soft time-raisined grins
yellowed by neglect
and cheap smokes.
Or again and
again
they hail me from
someone else's summer lawns
wild with green heat;
old men's thin filament ribs swelling
at the sight of
lean brown limbs
flashing against pale cottons;
and there is something
in the sudden proud
set of their heads
angling against the
hot white plate in the sky
that reminds me that
once
their spines flowed like rivers.

—Teresa Moore

Old Man —Mike Garland

CALL IT HOPE

We wandered into a step-down forest,
a crater in the earth
where no breeze stirred,
where trees were old men
with gnarled hands and bony knees
and nothing to do with their time
but complain
and complain louder.

We ran
and the rain ran above us.
Just as we reached the edge
it began to fall.
It burned our eyes;
it was the color of fever and blush-bright fear
and we died a little
drop by drop
beside the old-man trees.

—Marilyn Myers

FROM HELL'S PARKAS: A NOVEL-IN-PROGRESS

I dangled my legs over the examination table and Mom sat reading a book in the chair next to me. The surgeon appeared from the other side of the curtain like Johnny Carson prepared to recite his monologue. X-ray film in hand, he began, "We don't normally do this type of surgery unless it is absolutely necessary. Since the curve of the spine has progressed to ninety-seven degrees, and since the torso has become markedly deformed, I see no reason to delay the procedure any longer. After preliminary tests that will determine if she" (he pauses and makes slight eye contact) "is healthy enough, Susan will be placed in Halo Traction. Surgery will be performed while she" (slight contact and shift to Mom) "is in the traction, after she has been in it approximately three months, or when her back's curve is straightened to an operable degree. During surgery, a rod will be fused in her spine. She will remain in traction for another couple of weeks and then she'll be fitted for a body cast that she'll remain in for approximately nine months. She will learn to walk again in the cast. Each phase of the process, of course, will be explained in further detail as the need arises. It was nice to see you again, Mrs. Oswald—see you . . . uh, *Su*san," he blurted as if with unexpected recollection.

"Mom?" I started as soon as he disappeared through the curtains.

"Yes?"

I lay flat on my back and angled my left leg at ninety degrees to lace my shoes and the tie part of the braces. "Do I have to go into the hospital?"

"Yes. I guesso."

As we left the examination room the nurse at the desk peered above her glasses as if she had radar. "Dr. McDonald is checking himself into the hospital tomorrow. Bad appendix," she added, looking down at whatever she was doing. "But he wants to make arrangements for Susan to check in for surgery as soon as possible."

"Well?" Mom prompted, "shouldn't she have tests or something?"

The nurse removed the pencil wedged between her left ear and her head and jotted something on a piece of paper. Still looking down at what she was doing she replied, "Oh, no, Mrs. Oswald. It doesn't have to be done today."

"Good. I wasn't prepared for all this so suddenly."

"Tomorrow will be fine. Have her here by 9:30. And have all pertinent information. Insurance and the like," she concluded. She handed Mom a piece of paper while she looked up for the first time.

"Thank you," Mom said politely.

They kept asking idiotic questions like, "So what grade are *you* going into?" They knew very well it was summertime, that I was coming out of, and not going into, a grade. And they also knew that I was going to miss the sixth grade altogether. I was taken in a wheelchair to the girl's ward on the third floor where a nurse's aide gave me one of those starched white things they call robes—large enough barely to reach my belly button and nowhere near covering my ass. Mine was the bed closest to the ward bathroom, convenient for obvious reasons, but I later found out that some kids wouldn't quite make it to the bathroom and I'd have to listen to, or watch them vomit right next to me.

Most of the kids were bedridden, though—in casts and traction. The girl across from me was casted from the waist down. A metal rod spread her legs about forty-five degrees and she lifted herself with a pulley that hung above her head. Mom told me that whatever they were going to do to me wasn't going to be all that bad.

"Wanna bet?"

"Don't be like that. If you convince yourself it's going to be bad, it will be. If you tell yourself it's not going to be that bad, it won't."

"I don't like it here already. I hate this thing," I said, clutching the gown. "I'll freeze to death."

"Want me to bring your own pajamas?"

"No."

"What do you want?"

"I wanna go home."

"But you can't go home."

One tear started it. "Now c'mon," Mom prodded. "It's not that bad."

"You don't have to stay here."

"No. But I would if I knew I was going to get well."

"I'M NOT SICK," I blurted hysterically.

"You want them to straighten your back, don't you?"

I couldn't talk right and I couldn't breathe right and I couldn't stop crying. I started making that snorting sound an hysterical person makes when trying to piece herself together. "J-just l-leave m-me alone."

"Really?"

"Y-yes." I got more control. "Yes. J-just leave me alone."

"OK," she said neutrally. "I'll be back tomorrow after work. Around six thirty. OK?"

"OK," I said, back in control.

When she left I cried to sleep, wiping my runny nose on the pillowcase so no one would see me.

They woke me at five a.m. for a "mye-*lo*-gram" someone *enunciated* as if I was a foreigner. Three times they stuck that needle at the base of my spine and three times I yelped and squirmed, determined to make it as difficult as possible for them to hurt me, all the while just making it worse. They finally put me to sleep and when I awoke they told me to remain flat on my back. I was *not* to get up under any circumstances. But I was freezing. I was positive they went and drained all my blood without telling me. I got up to get a blanket from the storage closet. Next thing I knew I was vomiting next to my own bed, and I had a bruise on my head. An orderly lifted me back into bed.

"How're you feeling?" an aide asked as she jammed a thermometer in my mouth and clutched my wrist to take my pulse.

"My—" I began with the thermometer in my mouth. "M—," I took the thing out. "My chest feels tight and I'm freezing." I put the thermometer back in. I saw a girl I hadn't seen before sitting in a wheelchair.

"Well whaddyou expect after a stunt like that? Humph—ninety-five."

"Ninety-five what?"

"Your tempacher. It's ninety-five. And you're clammy, too. Listen, don't go trying a stunt like that again."

"Who's that?" I asked, pointing to the girl in the wheelchair.

"That's Vicki."

"What's wrong with her?" She was confined to that wheelchair and had saliva running down her chin.

"Hit by a bus. When she was twelve she got hit by a bus walking to school. Broke her neck, back, both arms and both legs. Brain damage, too."

"How old is she?"

"Sixteen."

She's been here *four* years?"

"Four years. That's right. She's done real good though. Her physical rehab is almost done, too. Try to get to sleep now, huh?"

"Wheel her over here."

"Why?"

"I just wanna talk to her. Then I'll go to sleep. Promise."

"You sure?"

"Yep."

The aide positioned herself behind Vicki's chair and leaned over and said something to Vicki. She wheeled her over to me and much too sweetly I asked, "So how are you, Vicki? I'm Sue."

"Fu—*ckyou*."

"What did you say?"

The aide just wheeled Vicki back to where she was before. I fell asleep wondering what I had done.

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"HANDICAPPED is when you're born crippled. Crippled is when you get handicapped. Vicki, you're crippled but the rest of us are handicapped." A screech sirened across the ward like an ambulance. I sat up, confused, and rubbed my eyes to see who woke me up. The sun cast a plaster-of-Paris white over the ward, but the light above that girl across from me burned yellow over the patient beneath it. Vicki was in her chair facing out the window. A schoolbus was pulling up. I'd know that sound anywhere. I figured out why Vicki goes around saying "fuck you" to everyone.

I was almost glad to be where I was. Not going to that stupid special ed school. But little miss announcer—whoever she was—didn't help. She was the real mousey type. Her hair really did look dirty, dirty blonde. She had a fair complexion but yellowy and shiny. The purplish circles under eyes looked as if they were carefully outlined at first, then neatly colored in with crayon. She was casted from her hips down with a board separating her legs into a spread eagle "V."

When she wanted to make a point she'd hoist herself up by the triangle suspended from the ceiling to just above her chest. She'd hold on real tight with one hand until it looked as if her knuckles would split through the seams of her yellowed skin. Then she'd point that know-it-all finger at whomever she was talking to or about and no one listened. This time she was pointing at Vicki as the bus hissed away.

Annette. I would call her Annette because she reminded me of someone else named Annette. This hospital Annette thought I liked her because I gave her a nickname. I *hated* the real Annette.

"What's *your* name?" she demanded.

"Susan. What's yours?"

She hoisted herself, as if to make another one of her announcements, but she kept both hands on the triangle. "Theresa." She pointed this time, "How come you're here?"

I slid down the side of the bed and walked slowly over to her side. "Scoliosis," I said, satisfied she wouldn't know what it means.

"Turn around," she said, motioning with that finger of hers.

I looked behind me.

"No. Turn *around*."

"Oh." I turned around automatically because I finally knew what she meant.

"Yep."

I just stood there stupidly, pulling the gown together in the back.

She hoisted herself again and pointed that finger at me. "Boy are you gonna hate it. Yep." She lay down again, keeping one hand on the triangle. "Yep."

"What? What am I gonna hate?" I pursued, inching closer to her. I was half asleep and still a little confused. They were already cleaning up the breakfast trays.

"What they're gonna do to you. Yep."

How do you know what they're gonna do to me?" I didn't even know.

"They just took one away. Yep." She sat up and got that severe old lady look on her face. Almost as if her lips would purse if they could, except they were too rigid. The knuckles on her right hand almost tore through as she pointed that nailbitten index. "Yellin' and screamin'..."

A nurse came over to clear Annette's tray and heard what was going on. "Miss Rebecca," the nurse said firmly as if Annette would know what the tone of voice meant.

"I thought you said your name was Theresa," I said, realizing I'd probably confuse myself more.

"Miss Rebecca seems to have a hard time recalling her name. And who told Miss Susan to get out of bed. Seems to me the last time she took it upon herself to prescribe ambulation she ended up genuflecting by her bed. Regurgitating."

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Portugese Children —Mike Garland

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Jennyooflekting? M. CEURCIO, RN
Stay away from this one.

It's one thing to see that severe, satisfied look on a little kid, casted from the waist down, who can't do anything except talk and point. It's another for some nurse to have it. She can give you the wrong medicine on purpose. Or she can give you more shots than you need. Or she can even tell the doctors to operate on the wrong thing if she wants to. Even cut something off. Her hair was pitch black against her too white face. She was kind of big. Not really fat, but strong. I'd rather take severe and pointing over severe and strong.

"Mind if I call you Annette?"

"Sure!" she hoisted herself and looked at me eagerly.

"OK, Annette—"

"Miss Susan, Miss Rebecca must attend to her morning bath. And so must Miss Susan."

I was so glad M. Ceurcio, RN didn't give me my bath. She'd probably try to drown me. Miss Carter gave me my bath. Carter was a sickly thin black woman. Her eyeballs bulged, making her thinness look childlike against those white eyes. She lovingly ran the washcloth along my neck, and the soft, warm water massaged each inch of my back. She told all about how a "bath is more than jus' getting rid of the dirt. Why it's a spirichul cleansing, child. A spirichul cleansing."

I like showers better, but Carter's bath was like one I had never had before. "An' ya need spirichul cleansing," she continued. "More than body cleansing ya need spirichul cleansing."

"Carter?" I was afraid to interrupt.

"Yes, chil'?" she said in a faraway way.

"I have to go to the bathroom."

"Well, don't go in here, chil'!" She was absolutely horrified at the thought. I didn't think twice about it. I always used to go in the baby pool. I found out later that that's why it was always so much warmer. I guessed she was probably right, though. It would be pretty gross. But at least she didn't yell and scream about it like Mom would have.

She squished the washcloth above my head and the water crawled down over my eyes, into my mouth and ears; some hesitated behind my ears then sauntered downward along my neck and then down my spine, chest, and stomach. "Child, ya gotta listen to the Word, ya gotta feel His love, ya gotta breathe His love, ya gotta eat His bread."

I couldn't figure out what all this had to do with peeing in the bathtub. I didn't care either. I thought maybe I could get away with it, though. At the rate she was going I'd pop before I'd get to the toilet. But she'd see the water turn yellow. I tried it with Mom once.

Carter finally pulled the plug and the last of the water got sucked down the drain. "Y'see, child," she continued, extending her hand to help me out of the tub, " ya gotta see the light to know His love." She wrapped me in a towel and went to the storage closet. I went directly to the toilet. I thought I was flooding the thing when Carter returned with baby powder.

"But to see the light ya gotta s'render to Him. Ya gotta let Him come into your life. Now you go on an' dress y'self. I'll be foldin' towels if ya need something." She handed me the powder and pointed to the closet. "The smaller robes is on the bottom."

I dressed, if you can call it that, and went back to Annette. I didn't know what I was going to say. She took care of that. "Susan, huh," she said. She was deciding whether or not she was going to like my name. "Rebecca is a crappy name. I like Annette. Yep. Annette it is." She hoisted herself and started with that finger. "You like your name?"

"It's OK I guess."

"Well, I gotta crappy name. And crappy legs, too," she declared. Only louder this time.

"Lawdy, *child*!" Carter's voice marched across the room and collided with Annette's finger, which retreated instantly. "God don't make crap!" Carter tossed the last towel in a bin and strode toward us.

Annette fell back onto the pillows that kept her partially propped up. "Oh crap! I went and gotter started again."

"Don't you *know* God don't make crap, child. *Lawd.* We been through all this b'fore." Her forehead scrunched up as if someone had insulted her personally. She reminded me of me when I'm trying one last time to convince Mom that I *didn't* do something. "*God jus' don't make crap!*"

"Well whaddyou call these," Annette demanded, pointing at her casted legs. "Whaddyou call that," she persisted, pointing at Vicki.

"Listen, child," Carter began, unfastening the triangle above Annette. "You talkin' 'bout two different things here. There was a time when I'd piss in the baptismal pool. Yessiree child, piss in the baptismal pool. But y'see it's like this here triangle." Carter held the triangle pointing up at first.

"What you got here is Vicki. Vicki, hon, you don't mind me usin' you as an example, do ya child? I din' think so. Now where was I? Oh yes. What you got here is Vicki. She started down here, like we all do." She pointed her slender brown finger on one of the bottom corners and ran it along its long base. "Things is goin' along jus' fine," she said, looking up to make sure we're following her finger upward along the triangle's side, "and then all of a sudden, wham! She gets hit!" Her finger falls to the base of the triangle again.

"Well, child, there ain't no place for this poor soul to go but back up here," she continued, and ran her finger upward along the side once more. "Wichoo, child, it's different." Carter turned the triangle upside down and again placed her finger on the long side, now on top.

"Wichoo, you're born with legs that ain' helpin' ya walk. And Lawd *knows* legs was meant for walkin'. See now you're startin' here," she looks up to make sure we're still following her finger along the top line. "An' what happens but your folks find out y'can't walk right." Her finger plummets from the top side to the tip facing down. "An' jus' like Vicki, child, there ain't no place for you to go but back up here agin." Carter marched to an empty bed that had the same triangle hoister and unfastened it.

When she got back to us she began again. "Now looky here," she says with that severe look that I had only seen on Annette and Ceurcio, "it's all the same." She touched the bases of the triangles so that one triangle pointed up, the other down. "Y'see," she repeated, running her finger along the longest sides of the triangles, now touching, "it's all the same. You an' Vicki—you're both the same. An' neither of ya is crap."

Carter put the triangles back. But she kept on. "Now the important thing to remember is neither of ya is crap. What's happened to ya both is a shame. It ain't no tragedy. Now it ain't no comedy either. But ya gotta remember that weez all the same, childrun.

"All this other stuff don' matter when it comes to the judgment day. Nosiree." Carter went to the clean bin and started folding towels again. "Jus' don' let it get you pissin' in the baptismal pool. 'Cause childrun," she said, resting her hands on the towel and looking straight ahead at no one, " 'cause childrun, that's a pool you're gonna swim in forever."

Mom didn't like me peeing in the bathtub. And she had always told me never to sit on public toilet seats. She never said anything about pissin'-in-the-baptismal pool. I didn't know what it was. Maybe it was because I was the only one of us kids who didn't have to go to Catholic school.

—Susan M. Oswald

Walking in O'Hare Airport —Hal Schmulowitz

A TWO COURSE MEAL, OGLING, AND A CONVERSATION WITH A JEWISH EMIGRANT

Ramadan and I sat around a big pot of *couscous* with two other Arabs. One of them got up to start brewing the tea and we kept dipping the hard bread into the *couscous*.

"You would eat a dog?" Ramadan asked me.

I looked at him. He moved well, dipping the hard bread in and eating with smooth motions.

"What kind of dog?" I asked.

"Any kind. Any dog."

The Arab sitting across from me grinned. The one making the tea grinned and showed two yellow top teeth.

"Not if I could help it," I said.

"What do you think you ate before the *couscous*?" Ramadan asked.

The man at the fire laughed and showed his rotten bottom teeth. The one sitting across from me laughed and slapped his thigh. "Do goats have such small legs?" he asked.

God damn Arab heathens. God damn. Don't get sick. Keep thinking goat. Think about something else. You sonofabitch Ramadan. I'll get some ham and put it in the sun until it turns a different color and I'll cook it and tell you it's beef and then you'll be puking.

"The tea is ready," said rotten-mouth.

"We bought the dog from Hammed Maral for thirty piastres," said Ramadan.

"Well," I said, "that dog was not worth thirty piastres."

We drove over to the west side of Tripoli through the old city to the English beach. They had a clubhouse there with benches and tables where the teenagers played rock songs in Italian and English and on the other side they had about two hundred yards of beach. Even in early Spring the beach was full of Englishmen. The Mediterranean is warmer in March than the North Sea is in August and the English learn this very quickly when they come to Tripoli.

Admission to the beach was five shillings or seventy-five cents American. Ramadan said he only had piastres so I paid for both of us and then he said he really didn't have any piastres.

We walked up and down along the wet sand looking at the women wearing two-pieces. A pink Englishman and his girl ran in front of us down to the water.

"Look at that!" I said. Ramadan was already looking.

"Did you see the way her tits were hanging out?" I asked.

"*Tch*!" said Ramadan.

"What *tch*? You saw her tits. What was wrong with them?"

"*Tch*," he said again. Ramadan says *tch* when he doesn't like something. He says this by pushing his tongue up against the back of his front teeth and sucking it down and away sharply. At the same time he juts his front jaw out so even if you don't hear the sound you can see that he's *tch*-ing.

"I thought you liked to come here," I said. "He holds her hand. I saw this."

"This woman was with the man," he said. "He holds her hand. I saw this."

"So?"

"This gives me bad memories. My good friend Absullam has known much pain because of such a woman. Are you acquainted with Absullam?"

"The owner of the laundry on Teresa Square?"

"The same," said Ramadan. "You would enjoy hearing the story of Absullam's trouble?"

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"If you like," I said.

"Absullam married an English girl. He was overcome for her beauty. With much pride he would walk in the streets with her. But his friends, except me, of course, would tease. 'Your wife has white beautiful legs,' they would tell him. 'Your wife has skin as smooth as the nose of a camel,' they would say. Absullam was very unhappy. He asked his wife to cover her body in the manner of a good Moslem woman. This she would not do. So to avoid being teased he required his wife to remain inside the home always. If she approached the door he would hit her. Ordinarily he would hit her in the stomach. She became very unhappy and asked Absullam to grant a divorce. 'It is simple,' she would say. 'Merely say "I divorce thee" and we shall both be happy again.' But Absullam would foolishly say, 'I do *not* divorce thee' and the unfortunate state continued. One day Absullam returned to his home and discovered in his bed his wife and also an Englishman. Rage took him over completely and he produced a knife with which to take the life of the Englishman. But the man had much quickness and Absullam could only cut his leg a little. I myself served as a witness at Absullam's divorce."

We stopped to look out into the water. The waves came in slowly, rolling and hardly breaking. The sea was a polished blue and underneath you could see green patches, almost black, scattered about.

"What do you think of that?" Ramadan asked, as we walked on.

"Well, I've heard better stories. Does it have a moral?"

"I do not know the meaning of this word."

"Does the story teach a lesson?"

"Of course," said Ramadan. "The good story must have a lesson. First I shall tell you a fact. One year later Absullam married an American woman. This one had fair hair and was even more beautiful than was the first."

"And now he's divorced from her?"

"That is so. But it is not a part of the lesson taught by Absullam's story."

"And what is the lesson?"

"The story teaches that the whiteness of a woman's body has much power over men."

We turned at the end of the beach to come back in the opposite direction. A slim girl with light brown hair had stopped about ten yards behind us. She stood there silhouetted against the sun pinning up her hair.

Ramadan nudged me with his elbow. "Very nice," he said. "King Idris himself would be happy to have her for his bed."

"Ramadan," I said, "no matter how fine a story seems it isn't good unless you learn from it."

"That is so," said Ramadan. "I hope you will profit from poor Absullam's story."

The best place in Tripoli to sit in the afternoon is the *Cafe de la Posta*. It occupies the northeast corner of the busiest intersection in the new city and has two rows of sidewalk tables. Some days you can even get cold beer.

On this afternoon Ramadan and I stopped there early, before the Italians came out to walk. He had an *espresso* and I was drinking *cafe au lait* when this skinny seventeen year old boy I know named William walked up to our table.

"*Ciao*, Tom," he said to me.

I introduced him to Ramadan and they shook hands very formally with serious faces, almost frowning.

"Have a coffee, William?" I asked.

"I think I'll have a mineral instead," he answered. William clapped his hands and ordered an orange drink when the waiter came.

"William wants to become a doctor," I said to Ramadan. "He is studying in school to pass exams for university."

Ramadan nodded slightly.

"There is great need of doctors for this country. Is that not so, friend?" William addressed this question to Ramadan.

"Not understand English good," said Ramadan.

We watched the traffic edge by the cafe. A white-suited policeman tried to coax carts, bicycles, horses and a few cars through the intersection.

"Tom," said William, "I am glad to speak with you today. I have something to ask."

"Go ahead."

"You go to England very soon, yes?"

"Yes. In two months."

"You will do a service for me when you arrive there?"

"Well, if I can."

"I will come to England when I have saved money for the voyage. Before this you will find a family for me to live with. I require only one room. Also make inquiries for work. The room and the work must be near a university with medical training. Please send a letter to me when these are done."

Ramadan looked at me and waited and I was trying to think of something to say fast before William remembered other things to ask me to do. "I'll check around, William. But I thought you were going to study in Benghazi or Cairo."

"No. England. And perhaps I shall stay in England always."

"Why?"

"Things are very bad here. Many of my people leave."

Ramadan grunted loudly and I didn't look at him.

"How are things bad?" I asked William.

"Tom, you can see many things. In Tripoli now are only five thousand Jews. Maybe twenty-five thousand *Italien*. The French are all gone to Tunis and soon only the Hammeds will be in the city. There is too much trouble."

"What trouble?" asked Ramadan, who had been pretending not to listen.

"Work is not good. Also many Jewish girls walk in the streets and some of the Hammeds pinch their asses."

"My people have bad memories," said Ramadan, in much improved English. "The Hammeds have also seen trouble. They remember when Mussolini came in the war. Tom, you know the racetrack on the south road to Misurata?"

I nodded.

"This was built for Mussolini. Work was long and hard for my people then. There was no pay. Still now there is bad feeling for the *Italien*. This is why the Hammeds pinch the asses of Italian girls."

"And Jewish girls," said William.

Ramadan gestured wildly with both hands. "This is not intended!" he shouted. "The Hammeds only want to pinch the asses of Italian girls because of Mussolini's racetrack! But it is not always easy to tell the difference in Jewish and Italian asses!"

William stood up. "I must go now. *Ciao* Tom."

We shook hands. William nodded to Ramadan and Ramadan inclined his head slightly. They did not shake hands. Ramadan and I sat and watched him walk down the street.

"I do not think he will ever be a doctor," said Ramadan.

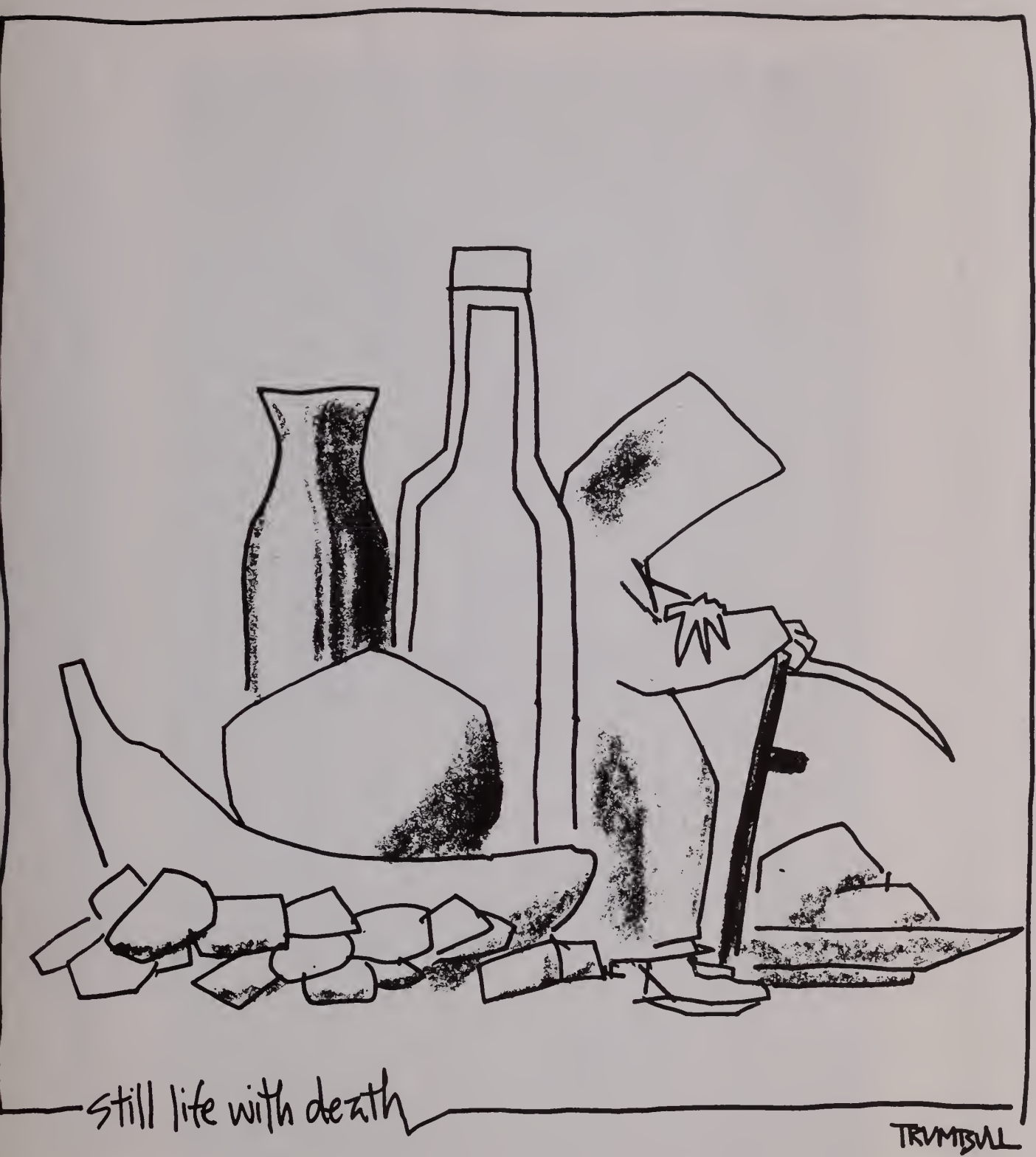
"Why not?" I asked.

"He does not look like a doctor. His eyes are too close together."

Ramadan looked down at the table and a big grin pulled across his face. "And your friend did not pay for his mineral," he said. "That service you must do for him also."

William was still in sight, picking his way along the sidewalk, moving against the crowd, not really making good time at all.

—Ernest J. Green



—Ed Trumbull

LETTER TO A FRIEND

Although I have asked you to meet me here,
I have nothing to say
except as we all write our deaths.
Every soft "m" dreams I have escaped and said nothing,
every crisp "t" snaps shut the lid.

Characters, we call them, and they people my house
with their lean bones.
They tease the five-year-old
who thought prayer was the sparks before her eyes
when she rubbed them
and was afraid of Santa Claus.
The whole alphabet dance even in the leaves
outside my window
until the trees are no longer
themselves. They want loose
from this letter.

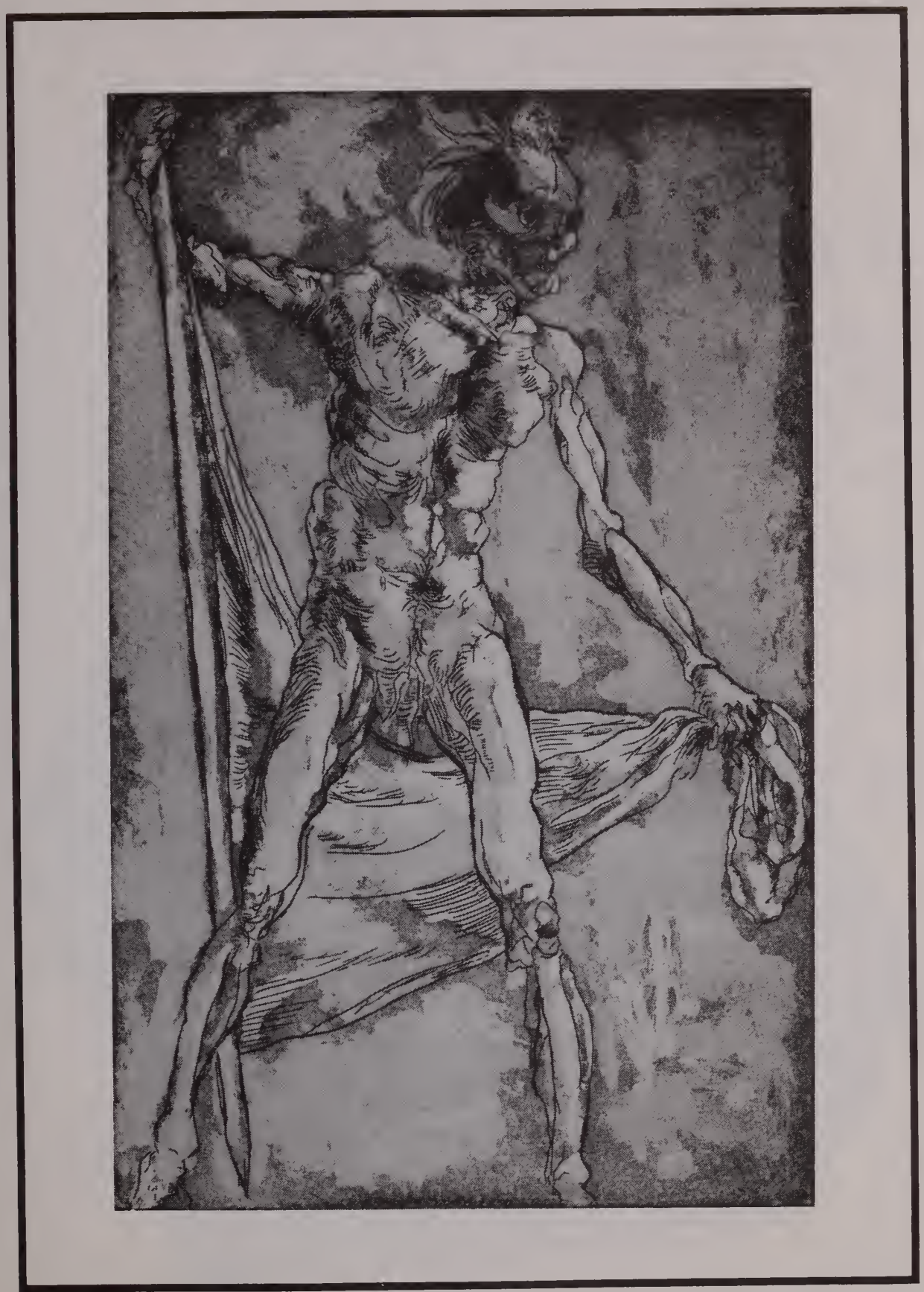
I am interrupted here by a word rising
which has no business on the page between us.
There, I have fought it back.
Instead, I'll tell you a tiny jar
eighty years old has been filled
with this summer's jam
by my dead grandmother's hands.

In my hands are lines I dare not write.
Life line, the fortune teller
calls one, and shows me the line of children
cut off, and my own, crossing the sea.

I close with love
that will seem to have no more meaning
than this morning's bath.

I am sorry for what I have not said.

—Sarah Maté



Death with Banner

—Diana June Nikoloff

AN OWL
OR
MY BROTHER, VICTIMISED

1

He tried to hide
under my coat with me,
but they caught him
anyway.

They put masking tape
over his mouth,
hemming in the owl there,
so he couldn't talk.

He sent this note.

2

"Why, yes, officer, we got a note
from his teacher just yesterday."

March 4, '56

Dear Mrs. Gold,

Arthur *scribbled* while we
were *drawing*. Then he drew an
eye in the mess and claimed he
had done an owl. Now really!

Mrs. Pigeon

3

OK Really.
Well nothing good happened
in school today.
We had to make masks.
Boo.
Yeah sure, real scary.

"What else?"

Nothing.

(He had seen it, and
he wasn't talking.)

4

(what he had seen)

THE NUMERALS
lined up
gigantic
in front of
the waterfountain

The Grades moving regularly
away

signs of a scuffle
feathers all around

5

Exhibit E

Your honor, the owl
in question
is essential to my case,
my Star Witness:

He Must Testify.

Grant us time.
Grant that the defense
will find it.

6

I take the stand

Where were you
at the time in question?

Inside, where I was sick
of having to use
dotted lines
to draw the angels.

7

The Summation

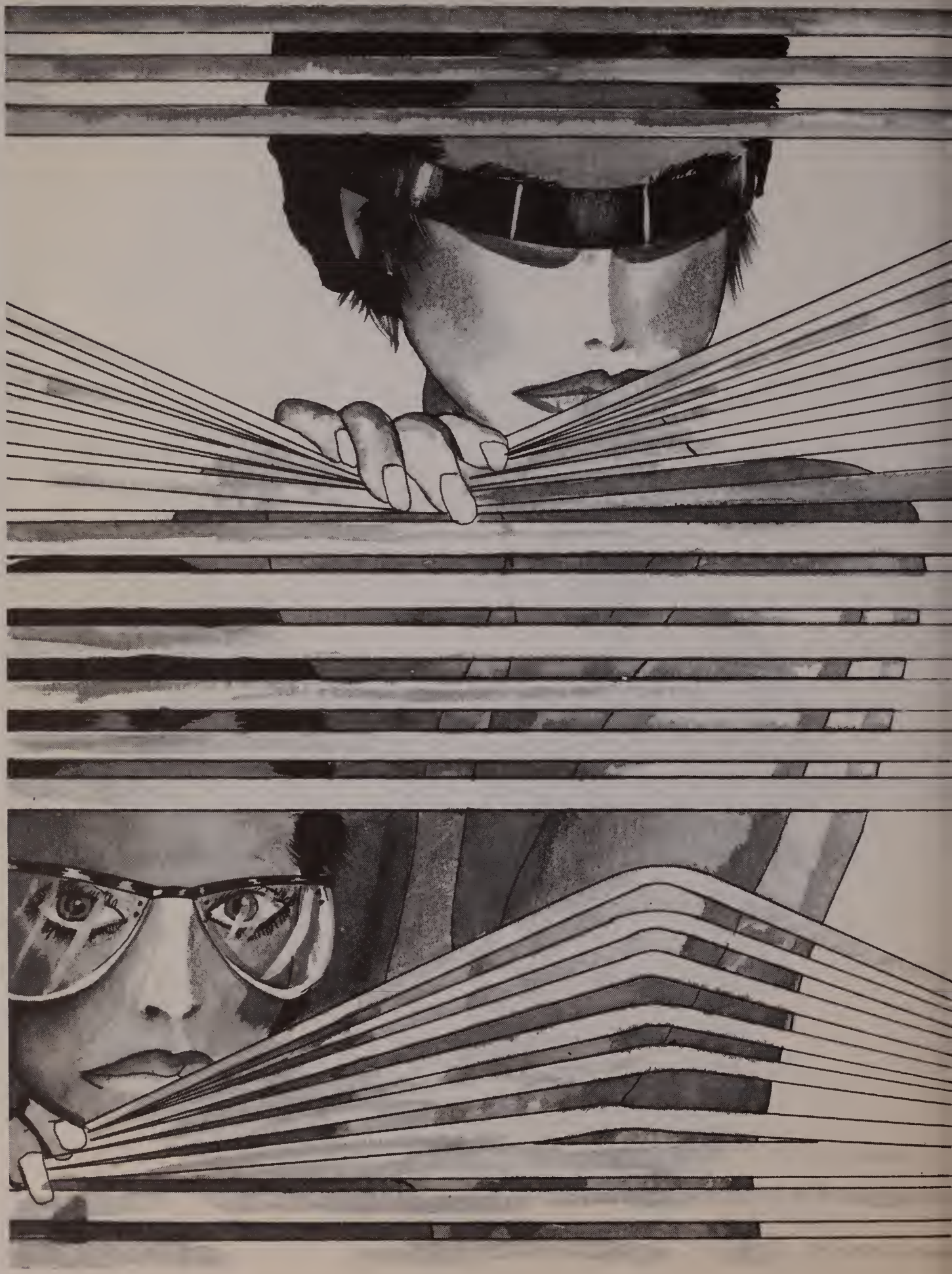
So when the gang grabbed Arthur,
they didn't know they also had the owl
(because it was in him).

They didn't know that Edward had *them*
caught in his coat, which he was wearing,
where they were running catching taping etc.

They will do time
in the hoosegow
for these mistakes.

—Edward Gold

—Andrew L. Johnson



—John Caruso

UNTITLED

"The point is there is no 'point at which' or 'this, here, watch this, this wraps it all up, brings it all together.' You see the film or hear the drumbeat, or read the poem, and BANG,it's like it hits you in the head, 'there is no point or plot,' making you feel like a vacuum, as though you'll be immediately enlightened about the truth in life. Then it's all 'I'm something, here in my hand is something that's mine, something I know about life.' There is no hand to hold it in."

Bill thought this every day.

In the morning, in the city, the concrete squares of sidewalks could have risen and thrust themselves into the air. It would have gone unnoticed among the cars and people; intersecting lines with shadows moving.

A radio played a song.

Walking on Connecticut, near M Street I think, Bill stopped to watch the Metro construction. There's always Metro construction.

"The same sounds guns make."

"Huh?"

"The same sounds guns make."

"Hey, you got a cigarette I could have?"

"Yeah. Crickets too. The same sounds guns make. Need a light?"

"Nah. I'm gonna walk with this."

Someone always stops in that little wood tunnel, hangs over the rail and watches the Metro construction.

Another radio played another song.

In the office it is idle time. It is stale. It is this list against that list against a third list that wasn't meant to compare. Constant gossip in the basic background.

In the hall Bill pushes the button, it lights. Bill listens for the elevator. Ting, the red arrow points down, the door slowly opens, the door slowly closes like a vault, Bill rides the elevator.

"Don't let it get you," Bill told himself, in the forceful manner we have of commanding ourselves when we border on a sort of inside crying. "Don't let it. Go to the country or something, where the crickets make the same sounds guns make."

If Bill fell in the Metro hole, over the wood blockade, down to where the cement is poured. Then would at least one reader feel something from it, go away and think, 'I have something to think about, something to hold on to?'

A fellow told me once he poured concrete on the Bay Bridge. He and another man, 12-hour shifts. One day three workers were missing below. They were apparently poured over, poured like concrete themselves into the Bay Bridge. He kept pouring concrete. The authorities got one member of each family on the bridge. They said their prayers to a pillar in which their husbands and fathers were encased. He kept pouring.

He watched them play their funeral. He kept pouring.

Bill heard drums in the smell of garbage. The smell of liquid dripping from a garbage truck all the way down Connecticut.

The idea is to surround the character with sound and sight. And I find myself trying to fill space, to slow the pace of this line of thought whose end result is Bill falling into the Metro construction.

There is another world in perspectives, looking into the pit of construction. Like walking through the doors of a stadium, full or empty of people, spaces are quiet in themselves. Attention is distracted from the camera shop, the parking garage, the office building, the vendor.

And he drove the truck that supplied the construction of the National Bohemian Brewery in Baltimore. The man who poured men into the Bay Bridge that is.

Another.

Another radio pounding the beat of the smell of garbage, another black woman's "I ain't about to," "If she wants to tell me about it," "That girl's got . . . "

They don't look in at the inestimable landscape that peers beneath the camera shop, the Riviere Building, peers beneath the out box and into the ice in the vendor's box. The elevators move slow and the third list belongs elsewhere.

"Is it a movement towards an emphasis on form, on textures, on a pulling inwards of various sensibilities, or is it a movement away (simply away) from shelter in structure? A natural movement when the streets are an overview of intersecting paths, men, women, cars and blown paper each on its own logical course.

"Each horn with its own destination in concern, drivers leaning tired heads on arms on windows. Each yell across the street from friend to friend."

Three businessmen now lean on the wood beam, looking into the Metro construction.

Bill passes, not looking tonight. Tonight there are other worries. Tomorrow Bill will look into the Metro construction. For four consecutive evenings he will look in, then not for two then will again. One night another bum will ask for another cigarette, another Bill will watch alone.

Then when he's watching alone he'll fall in, or else he fell in already, during the slow descent in the cryptic elevator and has been poured over by concrete.

But he really doesn't fall in, that's not the point. The point is the sound he made as he fell, and what he noticed when he fell, as the garbage pounded.

The clouds were moving their slow horizontal above the buildings, slow waltzing, and his vertical motion pushed the building slightly up into the clouds. It was a triangle of relative motions, and it looked like that to him.

— Martin Drake

Ugly —Janet Fisher

Egg — Richard Aubrey Gajewski

A FURRY CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Dear Mr Clyde A Bowen

I am writing to complain about the rats. They is a lot of them hear. I seen one yesterday. It was big.
Can you do anything about them. My kids might be bit on the feet.
Yours truly

Jenny P. Madison-Talbot

Dear Mrs. Talbot:

We have contacted Marden and Hanscomb, Inc., with an inquiry concerning your problem. They report that the standard extermination services provided in our contract with them have been performed at the property in question on July 15th and September 2nd of this year.

Furthermore, I am informed that a representative of Marden and Hanscomb verbally communicated with you on the date of the latter visit to the effect that, in the absence of minimal standards of cleanliness and garbage control, extermination services could not be guaranteed.

Please be advised that future pest control services will be performed periodically. However, we feel that a dual responsibility must be recognized. These services will continue to be inneffectual without your cooperation.

Sincerely,

James M. Clyde
President, Clyde and Bowen Realty, Inc.

Dear Mr Clyde A Bowen

I dont unnerstand the letter. Does it mean you will or you wont get rid of the rats.
When I set on the porch after dark I can here them. Will you come over and set on the porch some nigt. Then you will here them youself.
I can make some money baby siting but no body want to leave they kids. It the rats they say. They big they say.
Yours truly

Jenny P. Madison-Talbot

Dear Mrs. Talbot:

The original lease for the property you now occupy expires on September 30th. The lease agreement contains provisions for termination of the rental agreement by either lessee or lessor with thirty days notice after said expiration date.

As we have been unable to resolve differences concerning maintenance of the property, I must ask that you prepare to vacate the premises not later than midnight, October 30th.

Sincerely,

James M. Clyde
President, Clyde and Bowen Realty, Inc.

Dear Mr Clyde A Bowen

I dont no what the last letter mean. My oldist girl Madge say she no. She say it mean I got to leave the house. That is unusual. I pay my rent reglar. Ever body no I pay when the check come.
I got no were to go. People dont want 8 kids. I cant move now.
Yours truly

Jenny P. Madison-Talbot

Dear Mrs. Talbot:

I hope we will be able to solve the matter of your occupation of the Clyde and Bowen Realty, Inc., premises in an amicable manner.

I have attached a list of county governmental agencies which may be of some assistance in helping you obtain suitable housing.

Please be advised that the previous notification concerning termination of rental agreement is firm and remains in effect. If you occupy the premises past midnight, October 30th, eviction proceedings will be filed through the proper authorities.

Sincerely,

James M. Clyde
President, Clyde and Bowen Realty, Inc.

Dear Mr Clyde A Bowen

I am writing to tell you the rats is gone. They was not rats any way. They was dogs. I run them off from unner the house. They was barking.
Yours truly

Jenny P. Madison-Talbot

— Ernest J. Green

A TREATISE ON THE PLIGHT OF THE INDEPENDENT STUDENT; OR, "SEE SALLY RUN" A LA LOU REED

For the purposes of definition, the independent student can be identified by the indelible mark of a cement wall across his/her forehead. In this study, we will confine our observations to women with rocks in their heads and pebbles in their pockets. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence does not attempt to attend school and work full-time at the same time. The independent student is one who must work to put Proust on the shelves, litter in the catbox, cigarettes in the refrigerator, scotch in the bathtub and peanut butter crackers and coffee on the desk. *Sans* sugar daddies, mommies or rich lovers, the individual relies on the resources of no checkbook but her own, and is usually without that Peanut Gallery as well.

To truly qualify for the Winner of the Seventh Annual Independent Masochism Tango awards, the individual must be enrolled in at least three academic credits at the end of the semester. The person usually registers for nineteen or twenty-one credits, but this number has been inevitably diminished. In fact, the independent student has become a pro at the art of soliciting "incompletes," withdrawing in the eleventh week of classes, late assignments, poor test grades and a generally shabby appearance in class.

The person averages three to five hours of sleep a night, seven to eight cups of coffee a day, twenty miles of pacing and two psychiatric counseling sessions a week. She learns to combine weeping in front of the mirror with flossing her teeth. She learns the significant aspects of isolation, alienation, dehumanization, depersonalization, deferred gratification and all of the other Capitalized Concepts which upcoming Papa Freuds discuss at cafe clatches with their rats and in *Psychological Abstracts*.

The person also comprehends the ramifications of personal choice and responsibility, affirmation and the prayer for serenity, while constantly questioning the existence of a supreme deity. She sings "Alfie" under her breath on the subway and repeats her mantra of "make-do" climbing escalators. In the meantime she forgets, or so she pretends, about Cinderella's assignation with a handsome prince and satin ribbons for her camisoles and slips. She decorates her efficiency in "Early Refugee" and "Late Garage Sale." Down in the manhole and up in the sewer the next, she never forgets how to be a lady. She will tell you: "A lady is one with the fuck-you's down right."

Her fetishes lean towards macaroni and cheese augmented by tomato soup and popcorn. She's the one in the grocery store with a worried look on her face who holds you up because she requests a sub-total after each item is checked at the express counter. She avoids bookstores and the finer stores because they evoke a prodigious amount of tears. She rationalizes away her hate of shopping centers with the belief that mass consumerism is destroying the fabric of American society, when all the time, she is nearly dying to visit Garfinkel's and mass consume silk dresses that float and tortoise shell combs that bespeak breeding.

She never looks at the bills, monthly bank statements or credit ratings. They lie unopened in piles under her bed. This may account for frequent bouts with insomnia. Toilet paper is a luxury. Her bottom is stamped with the sports section and the want ads, but that doesn't bother her. She believes that adversity builds character, crisis is good for the backbone and painless lives are without distinction.

Meanwhile, inside her a little voice keeps calling "I want, I want," and she tells it to hush and go to sleep. She wonders about life after suicide, never seriously taking the option with a private conviction that Sylvia Plath was a fool, because she's been running so long that she doesn't have the time or the energy or the cash to find the means. Instead, she falls in love at the drop of a handkerchief and associates herself with the Romantic era in pulp-novels. She sneaks into movies that promise a tearful conclusion. "Stop," you said!? She can't stop. She's characterized by narcissistic perfectionism. She doesn't have time to stop.

The world revolves and spins faster every day, the clock winds down and the sidewalk cracks speed up and the letters go unwritten, bills unpaid, cat unfed, garbage undisposed, face unwashed and she slows down. But of course, she loves the music of melodrama and the delicacy of cliche. Her life has been one long, uninterrupted "B" movie and she doesn't know how to live otherwise. She can survive the perils of Claudine; she can command the Imperial Forces of the Third World War; she can mediate a baseball strike, but when the music slows down. . . .

She keeps pushing because the Puritan ethic promised success someday if she worked hard enough, and she's running to that someday, equipped with Maalox, aspirin and Woolworth tennis shoes. No one can tell her anything. Sally keeps on running with silk legs in hair stockings and dreams. She never considers herself important, but she can make you feel wonderful. When you touch her, she is surprised and sighs deep.

To conclude our study, she's frantic, lonely, alone and desperate. She's soft and warm, hard and cold, tired and alive, but alive. She's your roller-derby-baby-lover-of-the-fast-lane-and-coinmatic-laundry-amphetamine child. She's ours and she's weary, but alive. Whatever happened to Sally? Didn't you hear? Sally can't dance no more.

—Michaela Hanny

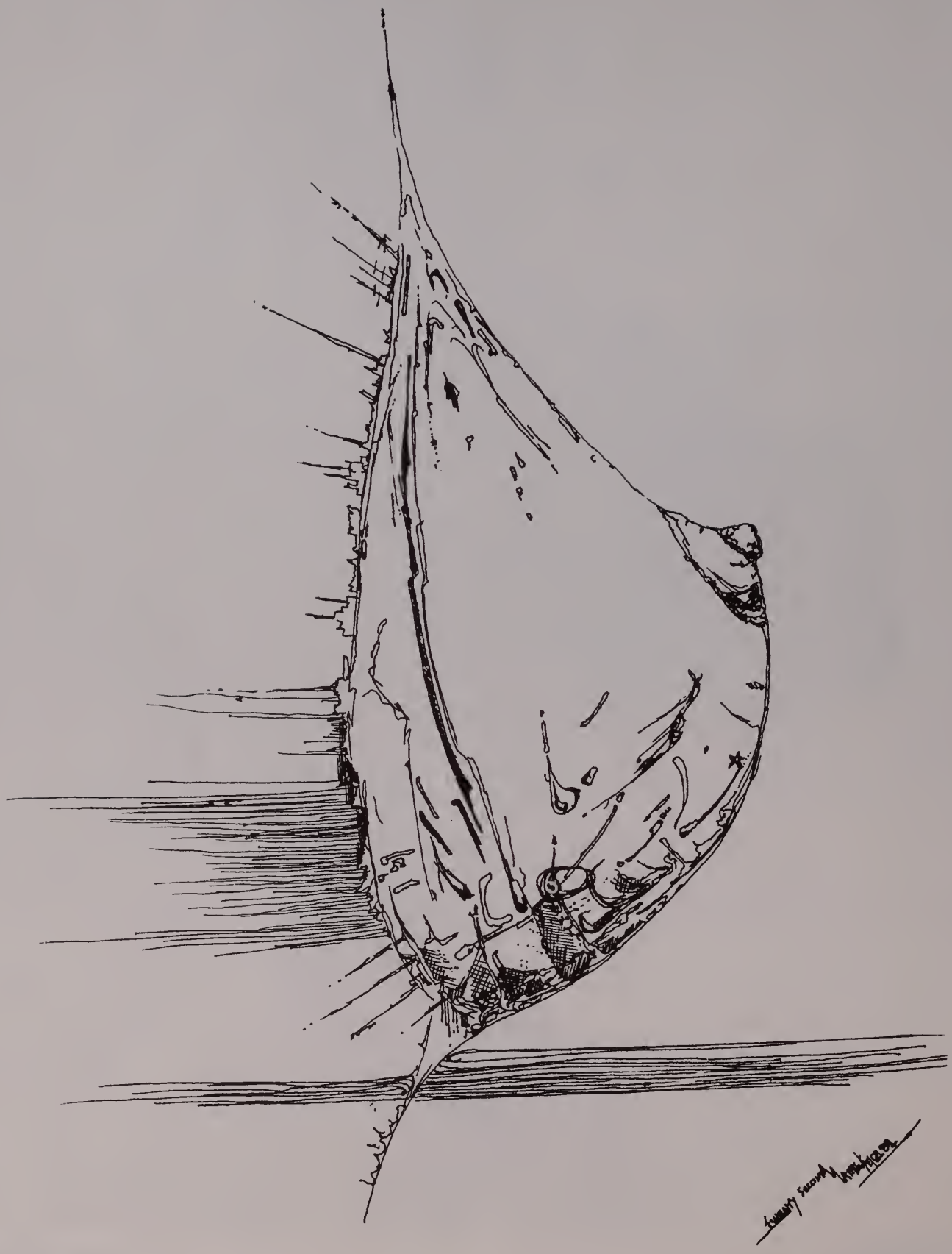
LAST MEN ON A DISTANT MOUNTAIN

Though they grit their teeth all
the while
while they hate their own sound
sound
for the sake of echoes
they hear
hear

—Jay E. Dougherty

A Distant Mountain

—Marshall Goldman



Twentieth-Century Breast

—Matthew Seigel

ABOUT POETRY

Was there ever in your family
a case of madness? An aunt perhaps,
who wore the insides of her dresses out
and spoke as if her thoughts were objects.
Imagine, it's a Sunday afternoon, at dinner
when she might politely have observed,
"My face is a service of white," but watch
her eyes are reckless as they tremble
level with a candle on fire.
She cannot even wait
through grace, she tilts her glass
at shadows, the dark wine lifted on
a wheel of light. She makes a toast,
she testifies, "Be single as a flame."
"Be soothed," you find yourself replying,
"by the red glass of an old church,"
and are you so surprised, her face
is a shine above the faces
of the others? Her luminous head
leaning across the starless table? And isn't it
just like the moon on water: how you take
her kiss straight through you
as if you had no skin, and isn't it because
she knows you'll understand her motivation now
as someone leads her from the table
that she calls to you, "Not Death itself,
but that same thrill of accidents."

—Cynthia Matsakis-Anderson

As Night Fingers the City — Richard Aubrey Gajewski

AT THE BARRE

It is not my mind, but my soul
that is sick. Nijinsky

First Position

We are all beginners.
Our mothers pull our hair
sharply back in chignons
secured by crooked, black pins.

Madame teaches us to stand
straighter than parallel lines
in yards of white tulle and
small pink ribboned slippers.

At the end of class, Madame
choreographs a part for each
in the summer recital. The
refreshments are lemon ices
and raspberry meringues.
Our mothers clap.

Second Position

Some have left to learn
the baton and trampoline.

The rest of us begin to
slice the wooden blocks
of the floor into thinner,
longer lines, to shape
the air into arcs.

We perfect the positions
to know grace.

Third Position

I dance with a man
for the first time.
It is not the same.
I want the pleasure
of catching myself.

Madame tells us
it is not enough
to remember forsythia
under rain in spring.

The arm must be taught
from the place where
the eye is blind and
the ear deaf to all
but breath and music.

Fourth Position

Everyone, including Madame
has gone. I am no longer
in love with my image.

I give up the constraints
of slippers and leotard.
The music? I cannot hear.

I need only to leap,
a simple motion with force.
I am practicing to know
the fullness of air.

Fifth Position

My mother is dead.
The floor is dusty except
where my feet have been.

I do not know how long
I have been practicing.
Dancing into a mirror
has blurred my memory.

I launch upon the felicity
of my breath for the first
time. I lift myself up.
Alighting, the floor is gone.

Sixth Position

How can there be dance without
the mercy of the floor?

It was the moment of landing
with full weight, knowledge
of earth after air which has
disappeared, which never was.

Pirouette, plié, epitaph,
they sound the same.

—Moira Burns

Down Looking Up

—Richard Roa

BIRTHING

I.

Even in spring bud, I wanted a man
fertile as a guppy,
wanted to be a hill
hiding seeds from the erosion
of more seeds.
I snuck a puppy into my bedroom once
sure that no one would see
and tried to nurse him.
His tiny imagination framed for him
a manhood sufficient to suckle
this Brobdinagian bitch,
paws kneading with fervent rage
my unfinished breast,
leaving thin red scratches
which stung in the shower and chafed
under my training bra for days.

II.

Hold me, hold me like a feather.
The folds of my unmade bed
will follow cream furrows
under the velvet-checkered field
that blessed my grandmother's bed.

Let us throw
fat, vulgar pillows
in morning play.
Kiss me, kiss me like wheat
pulling down the wind.

We'll wallow across an earth
of unharvested seed,
an orchard after spring drop.

III.

Our dream child is a mixed vegetable:
first a bean, heavy head on thin curve of stem,
a beet in tears, his small asparagus pulsing.
Eyes closed in sleep,
he's a quarter-Irish potato.
This fall seedling will blossom
in a season beyond our winter
like broccoli increasing yield,
the more reaping.

Worm, worm, you will have trouble with this pear.

IV.

The slippery after-wet down my thighs
prefigures red.
I hear the elegy of ridiculous, pregnant tulips
and hold my breath.
No amount of thumping
will make this watch tick again.

I am a hill rains in the gully have left raw.

V.

Two of my own seeds dead,
I raised a real garden,
my first. I watered each suckling
by name too secret to share,
even with the rain.
Weeds I pulled like glass from a cut,
soothing the darker holes they left.
Not a single plant died.

I have not yet wanted another garden.
There is a time too late for planting,
a time in each winter so cold
the thought of spring
is another death.

—Sarah Maté

Dream

—Janet Fisher

A WOMAN ALONE

A woman alone is an unwalked field shaking her mane of dew.
Look closely, you may see her.

Or, perhaps,
she is the cat
who searches all night for a high place to sleep
and settles for the moon.

In the afternoon many women who are alone
let down their straps in the backyard
and heat like bricks.
By night they are hot enough to blow glass.

Navy wives with their sad washing meet over coffee,
the coldest ocean in their eyes.
They are the tiny islands of fire trailing the ship,
winking their need.

There are women who store away their hearts like suitcases
waiting to be dragged from the closet
waiting for someone's hand.

Sometimes a woman alone will get her hair done
and float through the shopping center a temporary princess.

But let's get back to the field.

All day the woman alone combs her hair and stays invisible.
But at night
she climbs down a well of stars white-hot with waiting.

Listen, can't you hear her?

—Sibbie O'Sullivan

WAVES

(1)

The ocean
curves in my sleep
like mother's noise
in the hall light.

At the night-shore
I sit in a small house
by the sea, and tie knots.

I want to stay here
taste on my tongue
nostrils, lips,
like an infant and breasts.

(2)

Salt cracks everything away:

Skin on a cheek,

Air,

Muslin used
to wrap the body
as it slides off
port side.

(3)

Soon
the crash, lull
crash and lull crash
and lull,
weaves the ribs
of a boy,
feet held by sand.

Wetness, darkness,

rock us slow.

—Neil R. Davison

MY MOTHER'S GARDEN

This vision
will not be washed away
by sleep or by seasons:
in a room by the ocean
that reeks of lemon and the stems
of wilting flowers,
two women,
you and I,
try to reach each other,
in silence,
our last chance.
Your huge eyes,
your sharp cheekbones,
your fine mouth:
The bare bones
of your beauty
are all that are left.
Your last and lasting words
were spoken to the light:
They know we're coming,
They know we're coming.

I said goodbye
to the garden you made
and tended in the northern sand.
Your orphans bend and splinter,
tasting the fruit
that transforms the damaged
into the blessed.
I clutch at the gift
you left for me:
My feet are forever grounded
on the earth
that ceremoniously
and blindly
made room for you.

—Susan Libby

INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE SPRING

Man, when he does not grieve,
hardly exists. Antonio Porchia

someone should warn you
it is dangerous
to play
among the coarse bracken

that the green fans
will lie down too easily
when winter comes
white with loss

that for your chosen lord
you will not succeed
less than the bruising
of his root dread

yet who could say
it is less unsafe
to stay here
in the softly crushing
weight
of your widow's bed

—P.H. Porosky

Eaten Alive —Dewey Wasek

ON THE BUS TO SCHOOL

In her flower-arranging course,
my mother learned control.
So all last night
I had to hold the ladder,
while my father hammered nails
into the bricks
to guide the ivy up the proper wall.

It would not hold.
She stood there with that look
in her eyes before crying,
which she would not do.

I held the ladder tight.
I did not loose my grip
until my father came down safe
and the ivy tendrils,
finally pinned,
began to climb.

Now as I hang on to the strap
to keep from falling,
my hand can not let go
of the shape of that wood.

—Edward Gold

MATTIE

Down the dusty road which lay like a cracked lizard tongue beneath the high hot sun came a fat woman and a skinny girl. The perfectly arid dust released by their footfalls mingled with the shimmering atmosphere to envelop them in a devilish, choking smoke. The fat woman, who was white, wore a loud dress which not even the immense dust could tone down, and a wide hat which held in shadow all but the outermost pockmarks of her shapeless nose. The skinny girl, who was black, barefoot, and permanently curved in the spine, swished her long skirt at periodic intervals, shaking down grit in concentric circles. Her bare feet smarted and she preferred the relatively cooler scrub grass poking through the silt by the side of the road, but every time she veered in that direction, the fat woman would snatch her by the ear and yank her back. The black girl's curved spine made her walk with a pronounced roll, like a peg-legged sailor on a windswept foredeck. She seldom looked up, or even straight ahead.

"Mattie!" said the fat woman. "You stay close by, hear? If I have to grab your ear one more time I'm liable to yank it clean off."

"My feet hurt," said Mattie, in a voice as soft as a whisper.

"Your feet can burn for all I care, child," said the fat woman. "You ain't slipping into the Marsh's cornfield before I have a chance to sell you to Mr. Livingston down at the crossroads." The fat woman raised her eyes and her voice to the brilliantly empty blue sky. "Lord I swear, I'll be so glad to get shet of this malignant nigger child."

They made the next mile or two in relative silence, Mattie studying her footprints in the dust while the fat woman muttered and cursed the heat. They came to the crossroads, where Livingston's general store stood like a dark brown stain on the light brown dust coating the roads and the fields.

"Now you answer right lively and proper when Mr. Livingston asks you a question," said the fat woman. "Act smart but don't be smart."

"Yes'm," said Mattie, holding the door open for her mistress.

Livingston sat on a stool behind the wooden counter, smoking a fat cigar and wiping his face with a large handkerchief. Flies buzzed in ever-widening loops about the molasses keg and a layer of dust had settled on the long bolts of calico. Livingston looked as if he, too,was preserved in the dust, and not until the bell rang over his head did he look up and notice the newcomers. He put his cigar out quickly and smiled a smile which resembled a ripe ear of corn, save for three missing teeth.

"Well now," he said. "Good day to you Miz Watson. I see you done brung your little house nigger."

"That's right, Mr. Livingston," said Mrs. Watson. "And if you got the cash, we can conclude our business right now."

"Well now," said Livingston, getting off his stool and walking out in front of the counter. "You didn't tell me she was a cripple."

"She ain't no cripple, Mr. Livingston," said Mrs. Watson. "She's got a curvey spine, that's all. The devil put it there, I reckon."

"But you say she's got some book learning?"

"That's right, Mr. Livingston. My husband, rest his soul, taught her the three R's. If he was alive now, I'd see he regretted what he done. I reckon he took a shine to the child, her being so twisted and all. But she's been nothing but trouble ever since."

Livingston nodded. He had been wondering why Mrs. Watson was so eager to get rid of an educated nigger. They were hard to find since the new laws had gone into effect. He asked her name, and when Mrs. Watson told him he stepped up to the girl.

"So your master done taught you to read and write and add figgers, did he, Mattie?"

"Yessuh."

Livingston poked her a couple of times and ran his hand with considerable curiosity over the hump on her back. "Reckon that makes you better than the field niggers, Mattie?" he asked.

"Nosuh."

Livingston nodded. "She seems docile enough," he told Mrs. Watson.

"She'll be all right for awhile," said Mrs. Watson. "But you got to keep your eye out sharp."

Livingston pulled a book off the shelf behind him and blew the dust off its cover. He opened it in the middle and handed it to Mattie.

"Lemme hear you read some, child," he said.

Mattie read a few paragraphs about the planting of corn, stumbling over only an occasional word, her finger tracing the lines of print. Livingston had to pull the book from her hands to make her stop reading it.

"You done pretty good, Mattie," he said, rubbing his chin. "I reckon it still amazes me whenever I see a nigger read. And you say she can add figgers?"

"That's right," said Mrs. Watson.

Livingston pulled the ledger book from behind the counter and had Mattie check the arithmetic. Mattie found one or two mistakes and indicated the correct figures with a pencil Livingston provided.

"Well I'll be damned," said Livingston "She does a better job than that no-good accountant I hired all the way from Sharpsburg. I still don't see why you're so eager to unload her, Miz Watson."

"I'm telling you, Mr. Livingston. She got the devil in her. She'll be just as tame as a kitten for a week and then, when you least expect it, she'll turn wild and wilful. Problem is the master was too soft on her, and she ain't had enough beatings."

Livingston ended up buying Mattie from Mrs. Watson, and putting her to work in his store. During the day Mattie swept the dust out of the store and stocked the shelves. She was strong for her size and could sling an entire flour sack across the hump in her back. She never spoke unless spoken to, and Livingston, a little itchy at first, relaxed by and by when he found he had no occasion to beat her. In the evenings, he set her to work on the ledger books, and was astonished by the speed and efficiency with which she put them in order. He was beginning to think he had gotten by far the better end of the deal in buying Mattie from Mrs. Watson, yet certain doubts lurked in the back of his mind.

"It's them eyes," he said to himself one night, as he was ruminating over his latest acquisition. "She got the eyes of a white woman."

Livingston recalled uneasily the look which Mattie gave him every morning when he first came into the store. It was always the same look, wide-eyed, direct and *knowing*. Of course Mattie always looked down at the floor the moment she knew that he knew she was looking at him. But there was always that queasy, initial moment when Livingston could sense the girl's intuitive power, and that moment all but unmanned him every time. Even his wife had never looked at him quite that way, not even in their most intimate, unguarded moments.

Livingston's sense of the slave girl's power was more a bone feeling than something known. He could find no justification in his heart for deliberate cruelty to the girl, for he was not a deliberately cruel man. Yet every night after Mattie had finished going over his accounts, he would take her to the shed in back of the store and lock her in for the night. The shed had a solid oak door which could be barred from the outside, equally solid walls, and no windows. The inside was cool but absolutely dark. Mattie had to feel her way to the narrow cot flung in one corner, and used her big toe to find the bucket in the middle of the night. It took several minutes for her eyes

to adjust to the light when Livingston released her in the morning. But Mattie was glad of the dark because it prevented Mr. Livingston from seeing the opening she was slowly gouging into the soft wood near one corner of the shed with a light pick she had stolen from the store and slipped into the hem of her skirt.

One day the Reverend Smock, a traveling preacher who wore a grey felt hat with a crease in its middle and who had some pretension of book learning himself, tied his horse to the post outside Livingston's store and trod over the crumbling veranda with a heavy, even step. He was rather stout, mostly bald, possessed a nose and teeth which seemed to bend in opposite directions, and had a mysterious yellow stain on three of his fingers. Livingston mistrusted the preacher because he usually asked for a large order on credit.

"Howdy, Mr. Livingston," said the preacher, making the bell ring extra loud as he shut the door behind him. "Right dusty today, I swear sir. Could shore use a glass of your soda water."

"Cost a nickel," said Livingston shortly.

"Well now, how 'bout that," said the preacher, slapping his nickel on the counter with an extra loud crack. "Didn't think you were in the business of skinning dusty traveling preachers."

"I ain't," said Livingston. "I'm charging you a nickel, same as everyone else."

Livingston took the nickel, rang it in the register, and squirted some soda into a tall, dusty glass. The preacher emptied the glass in three gulps.

"Now what else might I do for you, preacher?" asked Livingston, who had learned to avoid extended conversation with this man. "I'm afraid I can't give you no credit this time, much as I might like to, because I'm already borrowed on to the limit by half a dozen others who ain't paid in a month." (The preacher himself had not paid in a month.)

"Well how 'bout that," said the preacher. "I reckon Christian charity is as rare a commodity these days as that old calico over yonder." The preacher pointed to the long bolts of fabric, which Mattie was measuring for inventory, and he noticed the slave girl for the first time. She noticed him, too, and their eyes met in a queer way which even Livingston could sense. The preacher's tongue, wet and bubbly with sodawater, fell momentarily from his mouth.

"Lordy," he said. "What you got here, Mr. Livingston?"

"My new nigger child," said Livingston. "Bought her off Miz Watson last month."

"Is that so?" said the preacher. "Why, she's a right comely wench, ain't she?"

"'Cept for her curvey spine, I reckon so," said Livingston non-commitally.

"Main thing is, she reads and writes most as good as a white man."

"Is that so?" said the preacher. "How'd you pry her loose of Miz Watson?"

"Miz Watson claims she real wicked-like," said Livingston. "But she ain't been no trouble to me."

The preacher watched Mattie measuring the bolts of calico, his tongue working its way around his thick lips while he stroked his chin with his stained, stubby fingers.

"Hmm," he said at last. "Seems I might have a use for that nigger of yours, Mr. Livingston."

"I already got her about worked out," said Livingston. "Don't reckon I can spare her."

"Well, I got this here publishing deal up in Atlanta," said the preacher. "I need someone who can take down my sermons for this little book of mine."

"I'm sorry, preacher," said Livingston. "I got more than enough for her to do already."

"C'mere, chile," said the preacher to Mattie. "Let me have a feel of that big bump of yours." Mattie dropped the calico obediently and walked over to the preacher, who rubbed her hump with both his palms, a queer smile lighting his yellowish face.

"I think that's enough there, preacher," said Livingston. "Mattie, get back and measure that cloth."

"Yessuh," said Mattie, walking out from beneath the preacher's hands.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Livingston," said the preacher. "I'll give you three hundred dollars in cash for that nigger."

"She ain't for sale, preacher," said Livingston.

"Well, three hundred and fifty dollars, then."

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MISSISSIPPI RIVER'S WATER LEVEL IS LOWEST IN 111 YEARS

You are the sky that will shower
on my freshly dug grave.
The cloud for babies to suck on
as the milk pours
from the mother's tight breast
unwed.
Take me through your storm
and flash one bolt beside me
so I will know courage.
If I catch this bolt
make me a hero
just once.
Show me a sign now.
I've bruised my freckled knees
on pine polished floors
and swallowed hard bread
in hopes you would return:
a pole in the ground
a pole that glitters
give one male peacock vulture feathers
and I will no longer ask
who earned who
but simply pass the next glass
bead between my fingers.

—Heidi J. Bohi

continued from p. 41

"She saves me that much a six-month, preacher," said Livingston, who did not believe the preacher had seen more than five dollars in his life.

"Well I want that nigger, Mr. Livingston," said the preacher, "and I'm gonna get her one way or t'other. You mark my words." The preacher rubbed the dust off his boots and walked over to Mattie.

"You hear me, chile?" he said. "You want me for your master?"

Mattie looked him right in the eye. "I belong to Master Livingston until he says otherwise," she answered. The preacher felt a hard glow work its way up from his spine.

"We'll see, chile," he said. "We'll see."

A week later, Livingston had to make a quick trip into town to deposit some receipts at the bank. He hitched his light buggy up to his horse and, feeling only slight misgivings, warned Mattie to take good care of the store in his absence.

Livingston had gotten halfway to town when two of the wheels fell off of his buggy. He was badly cut in the ensuing fall. He unhitched the horse and rode bareback into town, got a doctor to look after his cuts, then rode back to his buggy in the company of a wheelwright. The wheelwright said he could see no reason why the wheels should have fallen off, unless someone had loosened the axle nuts.

When Livingston finally arrived back at his store, it was almost dark. He opened the door to find Mattie in the process of slitting open the last of his flour sacks with the long cheese knife. Sacks of flour lay all around her, drawn and quartered, their contents spilled in a pile up to her knees. Mattie stood in the middle of this mountain of flour, as white and pure as an angel. She was white to the roots of her hair, and with every pull of the long knife she released great billowing puffs of whiteness.

"Mattie, what the hell are you doing?" said Livingston.

"Cutting open all your white flour sacks, Master Livingston," said Mattie.

Mr. Livingston beat Mattie, first with his fists, then with a whip. He smashed her head against the wall until she fell unconscious, then revived her by burning her cheeks with his cigar. He beat her until she could no longer shriek, then threw her into the shed and barred it for two days. Then he pulled her out and beat her again and put her back for two more days. He would have gone on a third time, but then the preacher happened to pass by. The preacher gave Livingston a hundred dollars for Mattie and took her out of the shed.

Mattie rode with the preacher, bleeding and broken, on the back of his horse. She locked her arms around the preacher's waist to keep from falling off because she no longer had the strength to hold herself up.

When the preacher rode through town all the townspeople came out of their houses and shops to watch. The preacher smiled his yellow smile and tipped his gray felt hat to all the pretty white ladies.

"Hug me tighter, Mattie," he said. "Hug your master just as tight as you can, you sweet-humped nigger chile."

—Larry Williams

APPALACHIAN MOVIE

On some dusty street in a coal town
you are still drinking and raising hell
with a girl who washes her hair in rain
water collected in a barrel and is
haunted by the old sorrow of her mother.

Her teeth are edged by the cigarettes
she smokes and when she's out
just for the sake for your company
she'll light one of yours.
You don't smoke filter.

Each morning you wake and shake
some niggling memory like the one
about how your second wife
fell in love with another woman
and your third wife needed
a name for herself and a baby and

your partner keeps planning trips.
He packs his bag with fishing tackle,
some queer pills from the bathroom closet
and the thumb-eared copy of *On the Road*.
He'll be leaving some spring.

Every afternoon when the schoolboys play
bloody tag in the gravel and Lady Goss
goes mad at the thought of dark, you
give your secretary another wrong
number at which you can be reached
and take your bourbon

to the window you've called
your movie.

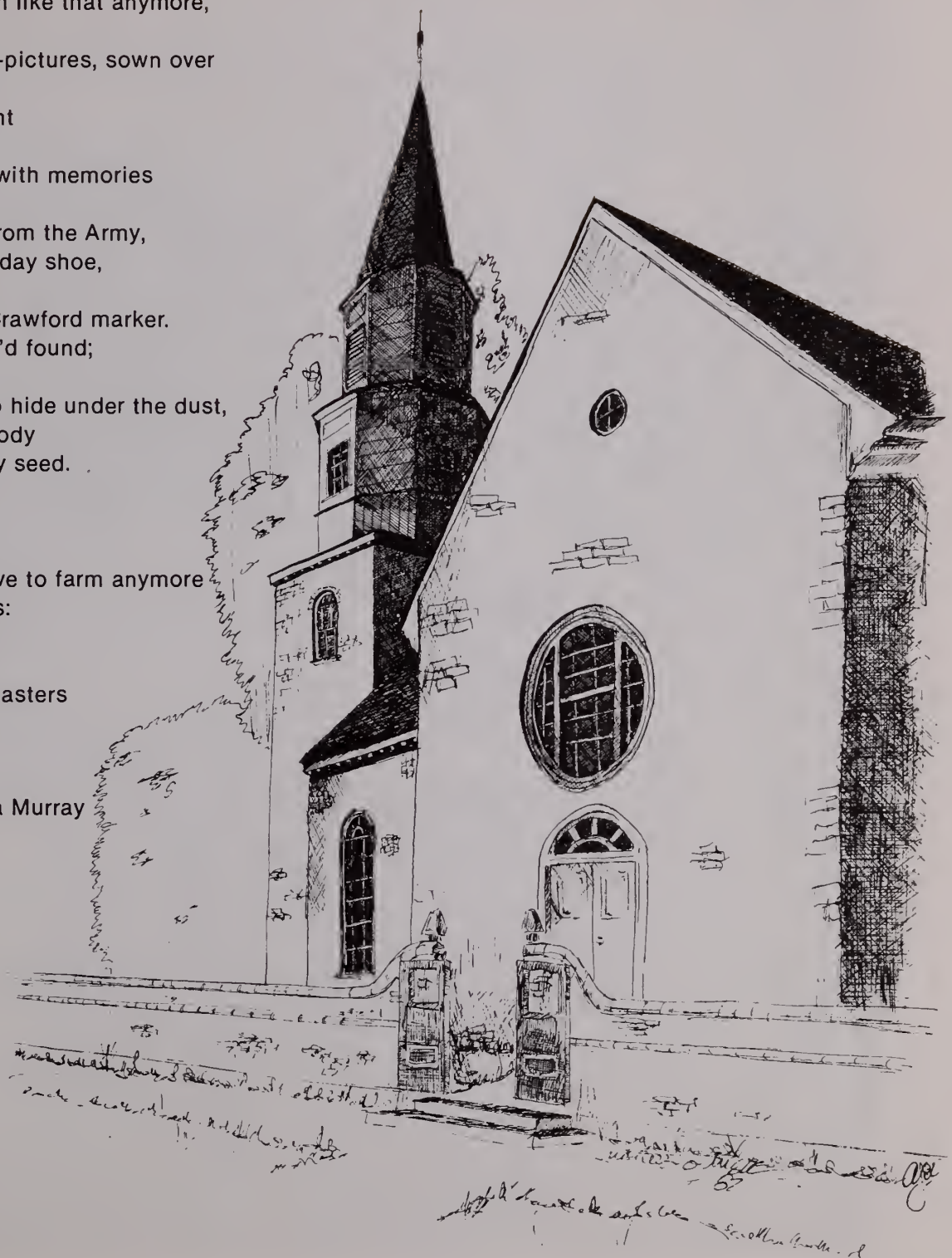
—Moira Burns

NEW CASTLE
VIRGINIA, 1969

The graveyard behind the frame church
("they don't make them like that anymore,"
said Aunt Sally)
is pitted like the moon-pictures, sown over
with dry stones.
The summer I was eight
and visiting
(my mother throbbing with memories
I couldn't have)
cousin Will, on leave from the Army,
smashed, with his Sunday shoe,
a fat spider
which had crossed a Crawford marker.
I dropped the flowers I'd found;
she was a mother.
Her young scattered to hide under the dust,
leaving her flattened body
the size of a blackberry seed.

I wonder why
in New Castle
the ones who don't have to farm anymore
put themselves on hills:
perhaps to be farther
from hell.
No one has looked for asters
in the graveyard
since I grew up.

—Pamela Murray



Williamsburg Church

—Andrew L. Johnson

LOSING THE GRIP

I.

Driving through Wheeling, West Virginia
I tell my friend,
this is the beginning.
He does not understand.
James Wright, the poet, I say,
lived across the river.
I believe he stumbles along
the sides of these highways
drunk, alive, his jowls
sag like the old whore's bosom
from overuse.
I look for him, and,
against my nature, expect
to find him
desperate, his eyes
caught
looking back.
He wants a ride
to the nearest graveyard
or bar.
I just want to give him coffee
and tell him how much
I don't know.

IV.

Across Wisconsin you see the dust
rise off the dirt in slow circles,
and you gaze over this earth as if
it were a long hot woman
stretched over your bed.
So you stop the car
and you pick up three pebbles
to rattle them, to feel them slip.
Your profile is etched
hollow against the harvest.
Your arms are thin against the cornfield dusk,
the tractor wheel, the round faced farm boy.
And you wish you were missing a tooth,
or you had a scar,
or that part of your right thumb was gone,
so you too
could prove your sweat.

—David Glen Swerdlow

Dreamy Tarzan —Lisa Couturier

THE THIRD VOW: OBEDIENCE

for Saint Therese of Lisieux, God's least

A thin stream of light
falls from her mouth;
her soul slides down it — a leaf
slowly called back
to its tree's root. Children
can tell us about these things

with their fingers
which are secretly small animals at night;
when the priest gives his blessing the nun, too,
shows us that her hands are really miniature birds
with lanterns swinging from their beaks.
Unlock the third vow, Sister! Tell us:

it happens like snow,
like a white kimono opening
to reveal a bright body . . .
When we take the vow of obedience
we are beams on the night, houses of light
calling the ships from shadow.

—Kate Johnson

INSOMNIA

We keep this fish alive,
still breathing twelve hours
after it is tossed up deck.
Wriggling, its skin catches the light,
sends it back to the water
in flashes of turns and jerks.
Its mouth open, bottom lip forward
refuses to give, refuses
to let the smaller fish within
come to life, to feast on its limp carcass.

We keep this cold body
laying around, its stink
burns the night air. We want
to rise from this dock,
spit out the fog
of our mouths.

I suspect we will rock our coffins,
bang with fists
the inside
of splintered lids.

—Neil R. Davison

Macro Leaf

—Richard Roa

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The Coal Pit

fiction by

Ernest J. Green

The only hills of any size around Catooka lay on the western edge of town. Smelter Hill was the highest and it did not rise much above the plains' monotonous, flat sweep.

A woman, whose name was Grace, lived in Catooka but worked as a cook in a roadside restaurant a few miles west of town. The small cafe was not cooled and the woman cooked over a hot grill. The past week had been almost unbearable as Oklahoma's summer sun beat down on the plains, and the cooking still had to be done.

Now, the day's work over, Grace drove home to Catooka in late afternoon. The road ran along a ridge next to Smelter Hill, and the woman could see the ruins of the old smelter. The smokestacks still stood, and beneath them were the crumbled remains of the blast furnaces. As she topped the ridge with the red, setting sun at her back, the town of Catooka below her was bathed in a fiery glow. Grace squinted against the glare and descended slowly into the conflagration.

The town's main street was almost deserted at the dinner hour. Grace parked in front of the Rexall Drugstore, with its large bird standing as an emblem on the chemist's sign, and walked inside. She bought a package of small candles and left the store, almost colliding with a man who was walking down the sidewalk. He ignored her and walked on.

"HELLO, MR. OLSON!" Grace called.

"I said, *hello*. I know you don't usually speak to me until the sun goes down, but I thought maybe you'd like to say 'good evening.'Even if it isn't dark." She glared at the man.

The man looked astonished, then angry. He glanced around to see if anyone else had heard, but the street was deserted. "Well, hello, Goddamnit, if it's that important to you!" He turned and walked away quickly, before the woman could answer.

Grace drove down Main Street and made a U turn in front of the stockyards. She pulled up at the town's only traffic light and waited for the green signal. As she sat motionless, a tear fell onto the back of her hand where it curled around the steering wheel. Grace was surprised, for she was not sobbing, and had not felt the tear slide down her cheek. The tear glistened in the twilight as if it were a diamond, a treasure lost and now regained. She drove on when the traffic light changed, blinking through its cycle even though no other cars were in sight.

At home, Grace immediately began making a birthday cake for herself. She beat the batter and searched cupboard shelves for many spices to season the cake. Never had she put so many spices in a cake.

When the baking was finished, the woman put candles on her birthday cake and began lighting them with a match. Having them all alight at once, she started blowing them out, one at a time. She blew them out with short, straight puffs and it took her a long time.

The cake was left untouched, and she went into the bathroom. She finished putting on her makeup, turned off the house lights and stepped outside into the warm summer evening. As she walked toward her car in the driveway, two high school boys passed in front of her house on the sidewalk under the street light. One of them yelled, "Hey Gracie baby!," put his hand on his crotch, and made an obscene gesture. Grace got into her car and drove away.

She drove out of Catooka, heading north, and two miles from the edge of the small town she turned eastward onto a gravel road bordered on each side by deep coal pits. Soon Grace pulled off the road, the headlights shining on a well-marked parking place. She parked under a tree and listened to the crickets. The coal pits had long since filled with water and Grace heard a frog croak, the sound magnified by the walls of the pit.

Within a few minutes a pickup truck marked DOGCATCHER pulled up behind Grace's car. Two men got out. One of them wore an undershirt and carried a six-pack of beer in a cardboard carton. The other carried a bottle of bourbon. They walked over to Grace's car.

"Hey, baby," said the man in the undershirt.

"Get in the back seat, Grace, " said the other.

"Don't be in such a hurry, Lester," said the man in the undershirt. "You want a little drink, Gracie?"

"I don't drink beer or whiskey."

"We know what you don't do and we know what you do do," said Lester. "Right, Ham?"

The man named Ham opened the car door on Grace's side.

"Take it easy, Ham," said Lester. "I'm first tonight."

"I hate seconds," said Ham.

Grace got out of the car, reached under her skirt and removed her underwear. She crawled into the car's back seat. Lying across the back seat, she put one foot against the side paneling, the other on the car's floorboard and, lifting her buttocks off the car seat, pulled her skirt up around her waist.

Lester kneeled on the car floorboard, unbuckled his belt, pulled his trousers down, took a drink from the bourbon bottle, and patted the bulge of his underwear. Lester was Catooka's dogcatcher, and Grace's nostrils filled with the odor of dogs. She expected Lester's grunts and ragged breathing to escalate into canine yelps as he became more excited. She heard the hiss as Ham's can opener penetrated a can of beer in the front seat.

When Lester had finished, the men changed places. Ham was heavy and powerful. He lunged into Grace with sudden, irregular movements. The car rocked.

"WOW! GODDAMN! OHBOY!" yelled Ham, and with a movement as natural for him as the frantic thrusts of his lower body, he supported his driving weight with his left arm and at the moment of sexual release, smashed the back of his right hand across Grace's face. She tasted blood.

A frog could be heard croaking in the coal pit when the car was quiet.

"Let's go back to town, Ham," said Lester.

"I think I'll fuck her again in a little while," said Ham.

"You do and you won't ride back to town with me," said Lester. "We're supposed to be in a poker game at ten o'clock. We promised."

"Well, hand me a beer," said Ham.

Grace listened to the frog in the coal pit. "When were the coal pits dug?" she asked.

Ham looked at her blankly. "Hell, I don't know. You know, Lester?"

Lester scratched his head. "Tho smelter was shut down before World War I. There wasn't no coal was dug in this part of Oklahoma after that. Thirty or forty years ago, at least. What's the difference?"

"I was listening to the frog. Wondering how he got there. Wondering when the pits filled up with water."

"Who knows?" asked Lester. "There's fish in these pits too. I caught a nice mess of perch in this same pit day before yesterday."

"Snakes too," said Ham. "I saw a water moccassin six feet long in this pit, wrapped around a tree stump."

"Hey, Gracie, look what I got," said Lester in the front seat. He held up a photograph in tbe dim light. Grace peered at the picture and recognized it as one of herself, a nude photograph. She reached for it and Lester jerked it away.

"Where did you get that? Give it to me!"

"Hell, don't get uppity. You're the one who let the picture be made, not me."

continued on page 3

The Living Room

Olga's slippered feet step quietly downstairs to the kitchen in the dim dark around walls and furniture all shades of grey before the dawn. Under the light of a small night bulb, she fills the tea kettle at the sink and returns it to the stove. Taking a Winston from a pack on the counter she strikes a match, lights the gas burner, then the cigarette and sits at the table.

Sipping black instant coffee, Olga silently steps into the living room. She sits on the sofa and looks to the trees grouped behind houses. Some of their tops sway with a breeze, their black branch tip silhouettes twisting randomly, softly, in one direction, or another.

The mockingbird is awake, heard through an open window. Its punctuated twill chases a repetition, stops, chases another, stops, chasing again the first or one different.

A stream of cigarette smoke billows and rises toward the ceiling, curling in the breeze with the curtains. A black branch taps a pane. The branch's shadow moves near her on the carpet, turning now and again to stray across her arm, thickening and stretching to the streetlamp's device, performing an erratic pantomime of wind on the wall and the starkly padded back of the greyed sofa, jerking occasionally to its seat.

In day's light the sofa is beige and casts its own unseen shadow on the wall it presses against. In her sister's house Olga would sink into the sofa's deep cushions, then blue, in the rare mornings they shared when Olga returned to vacation in her home town. The sun glared from the polished floor, and they sat, she and her sister, sipping tea or coffee, talking the morning away of their brothers, their mother and occasionally their father.

"Joe put up with enough, Mary."

"But he didn't even come back to see Mom."

"The war separated us all."

"But we came back, Olga."

"For a while. Joe saw enough for long enough, what with the war, and after all, Dad—"

"But he never even saw Mom."

"Things happen, Mary. There's no use dwelling on it all now."

"I still see him in the mornings sometimes, in his uniform, smiling and so young. They were so young, Olga. Smiling and in his uniform. He was so young, he could have come back."

"Things happen, Mary," Olga said, rising from the sofa, stepping toward the window, toward that source of glare.

"Oh, and I think of Mom so much too, Olga, sitting in her rocking chair by that window every day, her hands folded on her lap, staring out. She sat all day sometimes, staring or dozing in the afternoon. She looked so peaceful, just like I finally found her."

"Peaceful," Olga whispers as the branch taps again at the window, the mockingbird abandoning his rhythm to try another. She steps back from the window and sits again on the sofa, reaching for her coffee after crushing the red tip ember of her cigarette to darkness in the ashtray.

When the sofa was brougbt to her house after Mary was gone, Olga avoided it, avoided looking at it and avoided its memories. She stayed in the kitchen in the mornings, or walked outside when it was warm. Sbe didn't enter the living room until later in the day, to clean, or watcb television in the brigbt afternoons when shadows hid in corners. Even then she sat in the armchair and looked past the sofa to the television, or to the window when cars passed outside.

After about a month's presence, the royal blue sofa began to press on her, filling the room with its insistence of memory, becoming a great shadow itself even in the afternoon's light.

She pulled the blue sofa out from the wall and, with the claw of a hammer, ripped the cloth from its arms, back and front. She threw the pile of blue and white away, threw the cushions away.

The sofa stood naked, for days, pulled from the wall. Its arms' stark wood edges sat. Its back's wood frame, stretched over with grey cloth, sat, its cushionless seat silent, a spring perhaps poking out. A naked child, it cast its angle's shadow across the floor to the wall.

A black branch's shadow moves across her arm.

"You didn't have to come back."

"I wanted to."

"You didn't have to feel you had to."

"I didn't."

"I remember your smile."

"Don't dwell on it, mom."

"You were so young, smiling."

'Things happen. A lot's happened."

"You don't have to stay."

"I can't."

"I've worn too, Steven."

"It dragged us apart."

"Something dragged at each of us."

"The war."

"No."

The shadow's length moves across the couch. "Memories." she whispers, her lips punctuating three puffs of smoke rising, turning, towards the ceiling. The mockingbird stretches a note, strays to another, turns and begins again.

The streetlamp blinks in Olga's eyes as another branch's shadow strays across her face, sweeping past her to the wall. She sips at her tepid coffee and sets the cup on a table beneath a darkened lamp as she shakes an ash into the ashtray.

For a moment the mockingbird is silent, then begins again.

"I've tried so hard to keep us all together."

"You did, Mary." "They'll drift apart when I'm gone."

"No, Mary."

"I just know it, Olga."

"You've been strong for them."

"Why do they make these beds so high? I can't see the television. Oh Olga, it just drags on."

It just drags on.

"I wish it were over now."

"Soon, Mary."

She crushes the cigarette into the ashtray.

"It hurts."

"I know, Mary."

"It's just waiting. I try to be patient."

"I know."

"They'll drift apart when I'm gone."

"No, Mary."

A car passes beneath the streetlamp.

"Nancy?"

"It's Olga, Mary."

"I wisb it were over now."

"Soon, Mary."

The streetlamp flickers off, on, and off again. Stretcbed shadows grey, as the mockingbird stops and turns, chasing another repetition.

—**Martin Drake**

Self-Portrait
Diane June Nikoloff

CALVERT REVIEW

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Crow by Juanita Mondello

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The Coal Pit

continued from page I

"You better give me that picture!"

"Take the Goddamn thing." Lester threw it into the back seat. "They're all over town. I can get another one anytime I want one."

Ham zipped up his trousers and the two men got out of Grace's car.

"See you next week, baby," said Ham.

"I might not be here," Grace said.

"You'll be here," said Lester. "Here in the same place."

"Don't count on it."

"Oh hell, you'll be here," said Ham.

As they drove away Grace could hear the clicking sounds made by the wire cages Lester kept in tbe back of the pickup for dogs.

She picked up her purse and the photograph, got out of the car, took off her shoes, and walked to the edge of the coal pit. A trail led down the steep bank to the water's edge. She moved down the slope, feeling the crystal-like pieces of thin gray shale under her feet. Crouching on a small ledge, she put her hands into the water and began washing the semen from the insides of her thighs. The water was cool and she stroked her cut lip with a wet hand. Suddenly remembering what Ham had said about the water moccassin, Grace backed away from the water and retreated a little ways up the slope to another ledge.

She took a cigarette lighter from her purse and held the flame to the photograph. Before the blaze burned her fingers she dropped the curling paper and watched it disintegrate. Grace scattered the ashes around the ledge with her foot, and looked out over the water.

She had never really looked at a coal pit. In many places willows grew close to the water. Scrub oak sprouted from the steep banks and the smell of new green growth hung lightly over the pit. At one end lily pads covered the shallow pool.

Grace watched with wonder as a light breeze rippled the water. An owl hooted. She stared at the pit and saw the men come long ago. They stripped the earth and left it used and open. She saw the soft rain fill the pit, watched the gray shale grow green trees. The fish, spawned in the clear Verdigris River to the east, swam up tributary streams, and through some secret underground spring, found the pit.

Grace climbed the bank and turned back again. She did not want to leave the coal pit. Where the moon was reflected in the water a fish broke the surface. Her mind began spinning through the cycle again, the hurt earth healed, and as she stared into the pit, the ripples stilled, and the moon, and time itself, seemed to lie in the water.

Look to the Trees
Janet Fisher

Four Years Later

"You use poems as a platform for
what you have to say.
You have made some progress with
effectiveness, etc."

R.J.

It is what my father must hear
that will help him never to forget
that he opened Pandora's box
and left us with only Hope.
And now I must name my first child
Pandora
under a grey sky
so he can never deny
the principles that left
the father in San Fran'
childless
the child in Butte
fatherless
and the mother at the end of the wick
waxless.
I will pretend his suffering forever.
Let me call it art
just once.

—Heidi J. Bohi

Western Union

Son,

I realize who you are /correction/ who
I am.

I am not a mole. I fear tunneling.
Seeing with my hands.
I fear the earth between my fingers.

I fear the salesman asking to help,
I fear the glasses on your mother's
face. stop

Once I had eyes, like you.

I learned to shut them in the morning
and open when I fall asleep. stop

I had words.
Now my tongue brands them inside
my cheeks.
My mouth burns. They will not come.

I want to hold you, and will never. stop

Please. stop

Sincerely,
Dad.

—Neil Randall Davison

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Latest Review

November 19, 1981

PICKLES & POLYESTER

by Jennifer LaRue

WHAT MADE HAROLD DO IT

In the basement of the cafeteria you can find the big jugs of institutional catsup and mayonnaise, and you can eat and drink it to your heart's content. Or your belly's content. Harold and I want there the first day he had his new leg, and we opened a vat of pickles (sweet: although I would have preferred dill, I had to oblige Harold in light of his celebrating his new leg).

Harold's life has never been easy. When he was born, the nurses covered their gauzed mouths with rubber-gloved hands and shrieked tiny shrieks, and the doctors all bent in for a closer look. He was one of fiva children born in the United States each year wbo emerge from tha womb sporting greenish splotcbes along the creases of their bodies. This splotching, in all recorded instances, gives way to tbe systematic rotting away of the various externalities of the body; in Harold's case, it was the leg that went first.

Harold handles this with remarkable fortitude. He even confided to me once that he rather enjoyed all the close scrutiny given him by his team of physicians, and he is certain that he would have been lost in the Irish-Catholic shuffle of his nine-child family if something like his disease hadn't happened along to distinguish him from the others.

"The best part of being in the hospital," said Harold, when we were halfway through our jar of pickles, "is being afforded such proximity to the nurses. They're built quite differently from the rest of the general populace. Broad, strong shoulders and tough, stocky legs, whole bodies made for lifting the sick and sorrowful out of their Adjustabeds when the sheets need changing, stiff, clean fingers that smell of lotion and a whole attitude of crisp whiteness. I think I will fall in love with a nurse one day, if I live long enough."

Harold scratched dreamily at his knee through the material of his pants, and I could tell it would be a few minutes before he would be ready to talk again. Harold gets that way occasionally; it's really no barder to get used to tban anything else about Harold.

Harold's skin condition makes it impossibla for him to wear clothing mada of any natural fabric; his wardrobe consists entirely of polyester versions of everything. Sometimes when I stand real close to him I can hear the textures of his clothes squeaking against one another, and I wonder bow he can sleep with all the racket of his Orlon pajamas. I asked him about it once, and he gava me a scowling sort of grin and said, "Why, I sleep in the nude, of course!" Sometimes I wish I didn't know so much about Harold.

I dug my hand back into the pickle jar, whicb was now mostly just vinegar and green color, as Harold shook himself and started to talk again. "If indeed my days on Earth are numbered, and whose are not?, I think I am obliged to make some attempt to cause a stir, to render myself immortal tbrough some astonishing deed. Something worthy of Guinness and Ripley; something that will earn me everlasting respect and the love of a strong woman."

Harold baffles me.

Anyway, that's how he finally got himself into the mess that mada him headline material for two weeks. He tbought and he thought until he came up with a suitable scheme, which he did not disclose to me because he knew I would veto it.

WHAT HAROLD DID

Harold Dacron took the podium at a closed meeting of the Metro Area Prosthesis Club and outlined his plan to his peers, who howled throughout the bulk of his speech. However, they all became solemn (some blinked to conceal the tears in their eyes) during his rousing conclusion, which was a call to all of them to unite in an effort to gain recognition for their group. "When we bave accomplished this feat, there will be no person in the land who will argue that we paraplegics lack senses of humor!" The crowd at the meeting surged forward and bore its new hero from City Hall out into the streets, shouting and cheering and supporting Harold with a network of prosthetic arms and legs.

Precisely one week later, on a midnight with no moon, the group convened around a certain equestrian statue, each member bearing a nondescript brown bag full of supplies for the evening's activities. A silent oath was made, then Harold led the others through the streets, into the heart of Washington.

WHAT THE WASHINGTON *POST* REPORTED

Harold Dacron, treasurer of tha Metro Area Prostbesis Club, was arrested early this morning in connection with an extensive act of vandalism perpetrated overnight in Washington's Mall area.

Visitors to the area will be shocked today to see all of the white stone monuments and government buildings glowing pink. Dacron and his band of followers allegedly spent the entire night painting the buildings, in an attempt to stir publicity for their organization.

Dacron, who was found by police at five a.m. banging by one leg from the statue of Abraham Lincoln, surrounded by a circle of M.A.P. club members, sbouted, "Fine! Go ahead and arrest me! Just never say I don't know how to paint the town red!"

WHAT HAPPENED LATER

Harold looked lovingly at the pale nurse who was changing his sheets after his surgery was completed (his false leg, which had fallen off during his Washington hi-jinks, had to be surgically re-attached) and smiled, "It was all worthwhile, being arrested and embarassed and losing my leg, if only because it brought the two of us together."

His nurse smiled back, poked him in a rotting rib, and asked, "Didn't you stop to think that red and all that white would make pink? Imagine telling our grandchildren about the time we painted the town *pink*!" And as she folded tbe last corner of his polyester bedsheet, she hoisted her soft plastic knee up onto Harold's bed and gave him a long, strong hug.

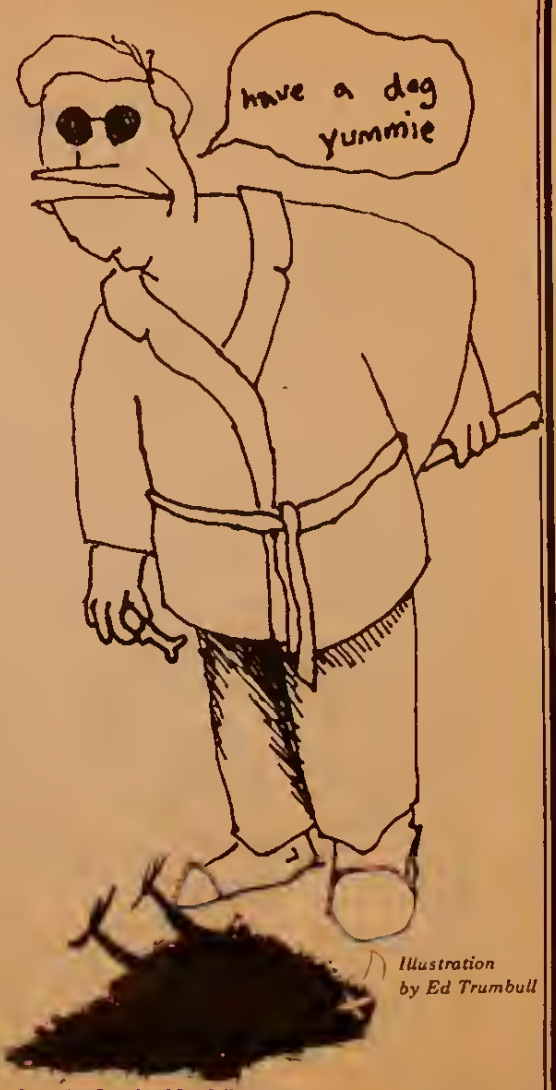

Illustration by Ed Trumbull

Crow by Juanita Mondello

THE SECRET CIRCUS

Somewhere in the dark tonigbt
Barnum and Bailey ara sneaking up
tents. Monkeys cavort on the high wire,
throw popcorn
at the trapeze act making love
on tha freefall net. Horses
soft-shoe, clowns kiss
and make up.
Forhidden to roar, lions mime
their jaws in hope.
All night residents drive past,
but they figure
it's a Levitt's Furniture Store sale.
Can't be the circus—would have been
in the *Post*, the *Star*, the *Sun*.
Look: it's a multi-media non-blitz,
a black hole in the news.
Listen: you can tell there's a circus in there!

—Sarah Maté

HOW TO KILL A TROLL: A PARABLE

Drop a biscuit down a well.
Hear its long silenca and small
splash. The troll (who lives there)
will snap it right up. He had lived
on thin scales of hide backing his hands so long
he had forgotten there were buttermilk biscuits
light as children's laughter with butter
or children either for that matter.
In fact it has been six years and twelve days
since he remembered there was light
tbe other side of the well-cover,
or horseflies or juniper berries or
bratwurst. However it is
he is willing not to go hlind remembering.

Anything you do now will work.
Throw no more: he will follow and fawn
split-pea-soup green at the thought
of his hands. Throw tha whole plateful:
he will eat and eat and eat
them till his marbled hide splits down the side and he dies
dreaming of cake.

—Sarah Mate

APPLICATION

What is your permanent address?
The wind through Thick Street
hasn't settled down

look for me in words like *startle,plum.*
They may hava to forward you back to *dork.*

Unless I hit the blue and lonely town
whose little lights I almost glimpse
whenever somebody blesses me when I sneeza.

What memberships do you have?

I belong to those who remember
and seldom say
who don't join up with much.

Member, I think I'm a carpal
just left of the spike
in the left hand of Jesus.

Briefly describe the obstacles to your work:

Eve.
No left turn.
That God made sweet sunfish
so full of bones.
Forgetting.
Remembering
it isn't Eve.

Describe the audience you wish to reach with this project:

Far off
in yellow kitchens after supper
they wonder if it's the trees
in the wind or tha wind in the trees
and thay are really listening for stones.

What other means of support do you have?

Tbe stick.
Forgiveness.

The speech of any child
wbo rejects its dying out

any star out there that lights on straw
instead of pointing only
yet another other star out there.

When do you expect to finish?

Perbaps at hearing my name
just when I know I no longer need
that saddest of words, the word *because*

perbaps some warm afternoon
between the rise of a sailing breeza
and a far phone
smell of apples halfway up
a thought about my hand.

—Rod Jellema

UNTITLED

"Insatiabla sexual desires and perversions." A woman's words rose over tbe next grocery aisle, from among cellophane crinkles and rittles. "Insatiable."

I shook a box of Kellogg's Raisin Bran and frowned, listening to its cardboard rumble. Flipped it into my basket, listened, wondered who she was. Slowly rolled my cart.

"Insatiable sexual desires." Louder now, "*Insotioble.*" Rattled my cart from cereals to catfood, listening. Heard her rattle from cookies to cereals.

"Des*ires.*" A rasp. "Ins*a*tiable sexual *desires.*" I stood frowning at the rows of whiskered tins grinning and gleaming in the white light. Heard a box of bran rumble.

"Insatiable!" A shout.

I finally sighed and grahbed the Kellogg's bran, and figured I'd go back to cereals and see her, pretending all along to need to replace the Kellogg's for Post. As if it mattered in a world of insatiable sexual desires. And perversions.

I picked tha box out of my cart. To make my act complete, shook it, frowning.

"And *perversions*! *Insotiable sexual* desires and—"

I turned tha corner—a display of pink paper towels—and there she stood, tha word "perversion" just out of her gap-tootbed mouth, huge knuckles white on the cart handle, her other bony hand pointing a long trembling red finger at the ear of her pig-tailed little girl, whose green dress slid up her thigh as she reached up for a box of Post Raisin Bran, frowning.

—Craig Stolz

A WORD IN THE GLARE

"Few of tha blind are mad," Roethka told his journal—
then wagered his mind by leaping with open eyes
down the shafts of poems into halls of light.
And Edward Hopper took his life to paint
the terrible proportion of ligbt to emptiness,
a final room containing nothing elsa, and full of it.
What wa can't help staring into is not just the invisible
presence of God, but also his visibla absenca.

This is not an age of dark, but of glara.
Tha Scriptures warn of it: woe unto them
that put darkness for ligbt, and light for darknass.
Woe to tbem that deflect us from signs and dreams
to the ligbted streets and squares of authorized lives,

These complex pictures force the imagination
back to thing, and back to so simpla a thing as a word.
I want now simply to bring in hand tha ligbt and dark
of one of tha single words for whicb I grieve: Treblinka.
It makes three winks, a petticoat, tremble of bell
or silver, magic ligbt forever charred like chimneys
stuck in the throat of history: Treblinka.
Thougb there's not enough dark to sbow it, I shake the candle
I've lit for a lunatic word I do not want to say: Trehlinka.

—Rod Jellema

How to be a Child When You Think You Missed Something The First Time Around

If you are going to be a child again,
you must always be hungry.

Have crackerjacks and sugar pinecones
for breakfast. If your mother insists
that you eat your oatmeal, tell her
you have discovered the geography
of the cereal bowl. Pretend
that graying lump of gruel is an island.
Surround it with a sea of milk. Carve
valleys with your spoon. Make craters
for the martians to land in.
They will eat it for you.

Sip honeysuckle blossoms when you go outside.
Try gladiolus nectar while you're there.
You know, the prize red flowers
your mother planted to win a garden show.
Slice tiger lily buds open and pretend
they are cucumbers. Hide the remains
under a rock or down the window well.

When it gets cold outside and the air smells
like vanilla ice cream in your nose
come inside and eat toothpaste until
your mother catches you and threatens
to buy Pepsodent tooth powder.
Burn the roof of your mouth with hot cocoa.
Blame your brother. Don't eat marshmallows
when they are gold. Toast them black and
wait until they fall off the stick.

When your stomach is full, try mischief.
Stick buttercup dust on your nose.
Blow dandelion fuzz into your sister's mouth.
Put ping-pong balls in the piano.
Stand on your bed with shaving cream in your ears
and shout: Step right up ladies and gentlemen.
Show us your buttons. Give us a roar.

If you are still restless, ask the lions
where they keep their whiskers at night.
Paint your grandmother's dentures with
two tones of fingernail polish.
Surprise your grandpa when he's drinking whiskey
and say "God bless you."

When the day is over and you have been sent
to bed when it's still light outside,
shake the world upside down
into one of those bubbles
that goes whoosh with snow
and fall on the floor laughing
for the goddamned magic of it all.

—Moira Burns

Chesapeake Morning

Whisper weeds, lion's hair,
amber vigil of the harbor
shadows the moring smoke.
All else is grey
in the hush of November.

The slap of the halyard
echoes a child's fallen spoon,
sings a clouds prayer
lonesome down the sky.

Mist curls over the rushes,
morning edges
beyond the fog, still
in the absence of birds.

—David Swerdlow

The following is an excerpt from a work-in-progress

Breeze through the window (smell of burnt leaves) and inexperience mock Claire as she tries to coil wbeat colored hair in a bun. Crisp autumn has swallowed the slow summer heat. Claire's knees press the hard underside of the outgrown dressing-table, disdain spills in her thougbts. Stupid vanity. Had to have it just because Alison did. Some best friend. Too *mature* for me now. (Some push forward like weeds that keep coming back; others are pulled, their roots clinging, then torn.) The vanity suspends her in childhood; as if that round face would turn suddenly sleek, like sucked in cheeks, if the vanity were gone.

Claire wants to wash the harsh pink of her walls moss green. I can do it, a seventh grader can paint a room, at least help. She remembers father is moving from his apartment north to Massachusetts or Maine or something M. Mother said he could not come back. His drinking, Claire thinks but isn't sure because everything is said in whispers after the yelling stops. Paint is a "frivolous expenditure." She imagines, "Christ Claire, are we made of money? Don't I lay out enough on your swimming? Not to mention chauffeuring you to practice. The way your father seems to have conveniently forgotten he's a father . . . . Claire you are just going to have to learn to do without." She could not ask Mother to discard the vanity.

"Ready to go?" Mother's voice from the kitchen.

"In a minute," Claire folds her towel in half on the bed, places underwear, brush and goggles at one end. Rolls them tight like Grandmother made grapeleaves. Pulls an M&M sweat shirt over her hathing suit. Reaching for jeans, thinks, funny how in tbe summer because of double workouts and weekends meets, all she wears is a T-shirt and suit. Now if she leaves her room in underpants and her sleep T-shirt, Mother snaps, "*Ladies* cover themselves." Claire feels shame and wonders what it matters especially with Father gone. Mother is proper. Claire seldom sees her undressed, only running to the hall closet for forgotten soap or towel. Once Claire needed toothpaste from her parents' bathroom while Mother was showering. She glanced through the steamy textured plastic door,saw a woman'a slender form. Dark patches for hair and breasts, like an art print.

Claire runs down stairs, popping off every other one. She can go up three at a time, but this is harder. "You're going to crack your skull," Mother warns the parsley-flecked ground beef sbe is forming into the pyrex pan. Mother steps to the refrigerator for catsup which turns brown sweet and crusty, the best part. Eyes narrowed on Mother's back, Claire pinches a knob of beef and sneaks it to her lips. "I've told you one hundred times, raw ground beef will give you brain damage." Mother has eyes in the back of her head. Claire wonders if they are beautiful as the hazel ones on her face, wishing she had Mother's eyes. "Claire, what have you done to your hair?" Accusation, not a question.

"Don't like it, huh?"

"You know you look better with it down. You have those full cheeks, from your father's side," the words turn bitter in her mouth like a rotten nut.

Feeling like the last one picked when teams are chosen, Claire pulls the clip from her hair. "I'll be in the car."

"Alrigbt. Oh damn, you're going to be late. Let me just touch up my face." She wipes her greasy hands on ber apron, "Here, take the keys. You can warm up the car, can't you?"

—Leslie Milofsky

This Is A Bribe!!!!

Okay. So you've just finished reading a couple of short stories and some poems, and you're almost done with lunch. Where has it gotten you? Well, get up and get a cup of coffee or something and when you get back, I'll tell you a thing or two about the merits of what you've just done.

You back yet?

Hopefully, you've enjoyed reading *Calvert* enough to make it worthwhile on its own. If you need more than that, though, just look at the turkey next to you. Three cheeseburgers and two plates of fries, and the whole time he's been slobbering his way through Police Log. Interesting reading, perhaps, but not particularly rewarding.

Everybody likes to feel elite. Maybe reading *Calvert* doesn't do the whole trick for you, but it's at least a step in the right direction. And if you play your cards right, we can make you a full-fledged elitist by the middle of next semester. All you have to do is bring two paltry quarters (if you're low on change, we can break a dollar) to the *Calvert Review* desk in the Main Dining Hall lobby, any weekday between now and December 11, from twelve to five o'clock. We'll reward your efforts by being really nice to you, reserving you a copy of the BEAUTIFUL BIG CLASSY *CALVERT* THAT WILL COME OUT IN FEBRUARY, and, for those of you who are into monetary rewards (don't feel bad; even the staff of the *New Yorker* gets paid) we'll present you with a **TWO-FOR-ONE MOVIE PASS GOOD FOR ANY FEATURE AT THE COLLEGE PARK THEATER.**

You don't have to be Mr. Rubik to see a bargain like this: you hand over fifty cents and get something worth four dollars, plus our magazine to read during the credits!

I can't believe you still need convincing.

If you can't be swayed by the movie pass, maybe this will work: the best reason to shell out fifty cents for *Calvert Review* is that it represents the work of a lot of intelligent, talented people who are a credit to this university. It's a nice thing to read and then put on your bookshelf to remind you to be proud you went here. Heck, if you submit something to our office by November 30, maybe even you could appear in print between our covers.

We hope to see you at our table in the Main Dining Hall lobby between tomorrow and December 11, reserving your copy for next semester. It'll also be nice to see your faces at our poetry and fiction reading and our art showing, both scheduled for next February.

SUCH A DEAL!

Bring your 50¢ to the *Calvert* desk in the MAIN DINING HALL LOBBY between tomorrow and December 11, 12-5 o'clock, receive your TWO-FOR-ONE MOVIE PASS good for any feature at the COLLEGE PARK THEATER (HINT: Use your pass while TIME BANDITS is still showing!)

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Poetry ..... *Moira Burns*
Fiction ..... *Leslie Milofsky*
Art ..... *Kim Crutchfield*

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